



SPP Reliability Coordinator and Balancing Authority

Communications Protocol for Eastern Interconnection

SPP Operations
0800EXT00155

Version 3.0

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Revision History

Date/Version Number	Author	Change Description	Comments
3/2/2016 Version 1.0	Neil Robertson	ORWG formally approved the document.	
5/4/2023 Version 2.0	Margaret Quispe and Brian Strickland	Updated template. Added document identifier. General language cleanup. Renamed and made more consistent with West document flow. Made more consistent with NERC Standard language. Added example Operating Instruction.	
8/14/2024 Version 3.0	Margaret Quispe and Brian Strickland	Converted some required steps to best practices to maintain consistency with COM-002-4 and reduce compliance risk. RR 639 approved by ORWG on 8/1/2024.	

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SPP Reliability Coordinator and Balancing Authority Communications Protocol for Eastern Interconnection

The purpose of this Communications Protocol is to improve communications for the issuance of Operating Instructions to reduce the possibility of miscommunication that could lead to action or inaction harmful to the reliability of the Bulk Electric System. This Communications Protocol applies to both Emergencies and non-emergencies where:

1. An oral or written two-party, person-to-person Operating Instruction is issued or received by an SPP Operator, or
2. An oral or written single-party to multiple-party burst Operating Instruction is issued by an SPP Operator.

An Operating Instruction is defined in the NERC Glossary of Terms as:

A command by operating personnel responsible for the Real-time operation of the interconnected Bulk Electric System to change or preserve the state, status, output, or input of an Element of the Bulk Electric System or Facility of the Bulk Electric System.

(A discussion of general information and of potential options or alternatives to resolve Bulk Electric System operating concerns is not a command and is not considered an Operating Instruction.)

Communications Protocol

All communications between SPP Operators and Operators at applicable entities shall be conducted with adherence to the Communications Protocol below. Operators at applicable entities are those operating personnel at Functional Entities subject to compliance to NERC Standard COM-002-4.

- All communications will be issued and received using the English language.
- Operating Instructions will be issued in the form of an instruction to perform an action and may be used to address Emergencies or non-emergencies.
- Oral Operating Instructions are conducted on recorded phone lines.
- For any Operating Instructions intended to be conducted on a recorded phone line:
 - In the event a recorded phone line is not available, use alternate telecommunications equipment, even if it is not recorded. Alternate telecommunications capability includes cell phones and satellite phones.
- Each Operator receiving an Operating Instruction shall comply with the Operating Instruction unless such actions would violate safety, equipment, or regulatory or statutory requirements. If the receiving Operator is unable to comply, the receiving Operator shall immediately inform the issuer of the inability to perform the requested action so that the issuing Operator may implement alternate remedial actions.

- When an oral Operating Instruction has been issued, the receiving Operator shall repeat it back, but not necessarily verbatim, to the issuing Operator in order to ensure proper understanding has been reached.
 - If the information is repeated back correctly, the issuing Operator shall acknowledge the response as “correct” to complete the oral two-party, person-to-person Operating Instruction.
 - If the information is repeated back incorrectly, the issuing Operator shall repeat the original Operating Instruction to resolve any misunderstandings. If the receiving Operator is unable to repeat the Operating Instruction or the Operating Instruction is not understood by the receiving Operator, the issuing Operator shall take alternate action.
- When time notation is necessary, all parties will use Central Prevailing Time in 24-hour time notation.
- Nomenclature used to describe transmission interface elements and transmission interface facilities (e.g. tie lines and tie substations) will be a common name used and understood by both parties.
 - Transmission facilities (circuits) will be identified according to the name of the substations they are connected to, as well as the voltage level and other relevant circuit identifier if multiple circuits are connected between the substations as documented in CROW.
 - **Example: “Metropolis to Urban circuit 345kV”.**
 - Transformers will be identified according to the substation where they are located. If there are multiple transformers connected at the same substation and voltage levels then further differentiating identification of the transformer will be made by referencing the circuit ID of the transformer as documented in CROW.
 - **Example: “Metropolis transformer number 1”, or “Urban 138/69kV transformer East”.**
 - CROW contains the officially designated and coordinated transmission interface facility and element identifiers and should be used for clarification if the nomenclature method referred to above results in unclear identifiers to the Operating Instruction receiver.
- In the event that the person(s) receiving the Operating Instruction ends the call prior to repeating the information back for confirmation, the issuing Operator shall immediately call the person(s) back and require that the Operating Instruction be correctly repeated back for confirmation.
- For the issuance of written Operating Instructions to a single party, the receiver shall acknowledge receipt in the communication medium the Operating Instructions were received (e.g., R-Comm). Alternately, the receiving party of written Operating Instructions can acknowledge by a phone call to the issuer.
- For the issuance of multi-party burst oral and written Operating Instructions, the issuer shall verify that at least one recipient received the Operating Instruction.
- Any observed failure of SPP’s primary or alternate communication capability will be immediately communicated by the Shift Supervisor to the TOPs and BAs within the SPP RC footprint, the SPP BA footprint, and adjacent RCs within 60 minutes of the observed failure (if the failure is expected to last longer than 30 minutes).

Best Practices

The following actions are best practices encouraged for use when issuing Operating Instructions in order to reduce confusion and help ensure consistency on the delivery of Operating Instructions.

- Prior to issuing an oral Operating Instruction, the Operator will inform the recipient that an Operating Instruction is about to be issued.
- Prior to issuing an oral Operating Instruction, the SPP Operator will confirm with the receiving Operator that they are qualified to receive the Operating Instruction.
- For oral or written Operating Instructions issued based on a known Emergency, the SPP Operator is expected to indicate to the receiving Operator that it is related to an Emergency.

Example: Emergency conditions that could necessitate an Operating Instruction include, but are not limited to: EEA conditions, real-time overloads, potential IROL exceedances, etc.

- A discussion of general information and of potential options or alternatives to resolve operating concerns is not an Operating Instruction. Time permitting, any necessary discussion of this nature should be fully completed prior to the point of issuing the actual Operating Instruction. This helps ensure the effectiveness of the Operating Instruction without undue interference from any supplemental discussion.
- The SPP Operator uses prepared scripts as necessary. This Communications Protocol will be utilized, where appropriate, for communication when an Operating Instruction is not being issued or received.

Example Operating Instruction Scripts

The SPP RC or SPP BA calls the receiving Operator to issue an Operating Instruction. This may occur as a separate call or after all other discussion is complete.

This script below involves a situation where a time notation is necessary. When time notation is not necessary, the SPP RC or SPP BA will use relative terminology, such as, “at this time” and/or “until further notice.”

SPP RC/BA: I am going to issue an Operating Instruction to you to perform X Action. Are you the Operator qualified to receive Operating Instructions to perform X Action?

Recipient: Yes, I am qualified to receive Operating Instructions to perform X Action. I am ready to receive the Operating Instruction.

SPP RC/BA: Ok, Recipient, the SPP RC/BA is instructing you to perform X Action at 1700 CPT.

Recipient: SPP RC/BA, I understand that you are instructing me to perform X Action at 1700 CPT.

SPP RC/BA: That is correct.

For Operating Instructions being performed “until further notice,” the SPP RC or SPP BA will call to release those.

SPP RC/BA: Recipient, I am calling regarding a previous Operating Instruction to perform X Action. Are you the Operator qualified to receive Operating Instructions regarding X Action?

Recipient: Yes, I am. I am also aware of the previous Operating Instruction to perform X Action.

SPP RC/BA: Ok, Recipient, at this time, the SPP RC/BA is releasing the previous Operating Instruction to perform X Action.

Recipient: I understand that at this time the SPP RC/BA is releasing the previous Operating Instruction to perform X Action.

SPP RC/BA: That is correct.