



Federal Energy Regulatory Commission



NARUC
National Association of Regulatory
Utility Commissioners

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FERC, NARUC Join Efforts to Help Ensure Essential Services During Pandemic

WASHINGTON — The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) today announced they are joining forces in their COVID-19 pandemic response efforts to help ensure the reliability of the nation's energy transmission and distribution systems. As the first step in this partnership, FERC and NARUC are urging all state authorities to designate utility workers as essential to the nation's critical infrastructure.

The U.S. Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency issued a memorandum March 19 designating a full list of essential workers: healthcare and public health, law enforcement, public safety and first responders, food and agriculture, energy, water and wastewater, transportation and logistics, public works, communications and information technology, other community-based government operations and essential functions, critical manufacturing, hazardous materials, financial services, chemical and industrial and the defense industrial base.

"Every aspect of responding to the pandemic — be it hospitals, public safety or workforce continuity of operations — all depend on reliable utility systems. Millions of homes are relying on these services," said NARUC President Brandon Presley. "The need is present 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the utility personnel responsible for ensuring the safety and functionality of our critical infrastructure should be included in any discussion or designation of essential workers."

"It is vital for the safety and security of our nation that there is no disruption in the services that Homeland Security identified, including those involving energy, during this unprecedented emergency," FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee said. "I am pleased to join with President Presley to encourage state and local authorities to consider the employees who maintain critical infrastructure, including line workers on the power grid and the operators on the pipelines, as essential so they can continue to keep these services available. I greatly appreciate Homeland Security's leadership in producing this critical guidance, and I am pleased to link arms with President Presley and all of our colleagues at NARUC in encouraging the states to adopt it."

The federal government grants authority for such designations to state governments. FERC and NARUC back these designations in support of the energy, water and telecommunications industries, finding it in the best interests of the nation for state and local authorities to assign essential worker status to employees serving in these areas of critical infrastructure.

FERC and NARUC have been in close communication and consultation on their COVID-19 actions and responses. Representatives will continue to meet periodically and welcome the input of members of the National Governors Association and the National Association of State Energy Officials. These meetings will allow groups to provide briefings and updates, discuss matters of mutual interest and keep the public informed of any new developments.

FERC is an independent federal agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas and oil. FERC also reviews proposals to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and interstate natural gas pipelines as well as licensing hydropower projects.

NARUC is a non-profit organization founded in 1889 whose members include the governmental agencies that are engaged in the regulation of utilities and carriers in the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NARUC's member agencies regulate telecommunications, energy, and water utilities. NARUC represents the interests of state public utility commissions before the three branches of the federal government.