

May 18, 2022

...they never get better over time.” Bryan Koon, IEM.



Panelists: Bryan Koon, IEM; Kate Marks, DOE/CESER; Mark Ghilarducci, CalOES; Martha Duggan, NRECA; Dr. Mark Jacobson, Stanford University. Photo from NEMA.

Next to losing their property, one of the biggest issues facing both first responders and citizens in general, is loss of power in a disaster. As such, speed of restoration is always a high-profile issue. Resiliency of energy infrastructure is also getting increased attention during events. As part of the 2022 Mid-Year Forum agenda, NEMA hosted an expert panel discussion highlighting what state emergency management agencies and energy providers learned from recent response and recovery operations that can help guide approaches and coordination prior to and during future events, including partnerships on improving resilience.

The state of California continues to experience longer and more severe wildfire seasons. Preventing and mitigating power outages from wildfires is a priority thus the establishment of the Public Safety Power Shutoff Program (PSPSP) by energy provider PG&E. The company pre-emptively shuts off power at areas of high risk to prevent fire damage and save portions of the grid that are at the most risk, while allowing safer, less risk-adverse areas to maintain power. **Mark Ghilarducci, Director of California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)**, said his staff works very closely year-round with public and private utility companies not only to plan for natural disasters, but also increasing grid reliability to protect against cyber-attacks.

The U.S. Department of Energy Office for Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER) plays a key role in maintaining situational awareness, identifying and mitigating cyber threats, and coordinating Emergency Support Function (ESF) #12 response and recovery operations. CESER also provides resources for states to advance and inform energy security planning, risk awareness, policy and investment decisions, mitigation strategies and emergency response efforts. Technical assistance is available to energy providers, and DOE also has response teams that can deploy into state emergency operations centers to support coordination efforts between states, the federal government and industry. DOE can also provide training to emergency management agencies to educate on DOE's role in disasters and emergencies, authorities, and resources. According to **Martha Duggan with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association**, small and rural utility companies benefit greatly from DOE's technical assistance program and also understand the importance and value of working closely with state and local emergency management agencies during blue sky days.

The NEMA hosted discussion also touched on the topic of transitioning to 100% clean, renewable energies as one solution to increasing resiliency in the power grid. When asked what the biggest obstacle to renewable energy is, **Dr. Mark Jacobson from Stanford University** explained that education is a big reason. The general public isn't aware of the technological capabilities that exist today.

Mutual aid is an important component of large-scale disaster response and rural cooperatives have long had their own system in place. The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) has also been used to deploy energy related resources for fuel shortages caused by disasters. **Kate Marks with DOE/CESER** highlighted a current project, in partnership with NEMA, to work with a group of western states to develop energy related Mission Ready Packages (MRPs) for resources to be deployed through EMAC as well as intra-state mutual aid response. Once completed, the energy EMAC MRP templates will be posted to the NEMA and EMAC websites for resource providers to use to develop their own MRPs.

As the number and severity of disasters continues to increase in every region of the U.S., critical infrastructure resilience is more important than ever. With federal funding provided to states through the 2022 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), state and local governments have the opportunity to make significant investments in community resilience, including strengthening the energy grid.

NEMA would like to thank all the panelists for sharing their time and expertise with Mid-Year Forum attendees on the vital issue of energy security. [A video recording of the NEMA energy panel discussion is available on the NEMA YouTube channel.](#)

A nation that can't control its energy sources can't control its future.

- Barack Obama

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