

DOE Hosts Southern Regional Energy Assurance Exercise and Workshop



On March 1–2, 2011, the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE), the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO), the State of North Carolina, and the City of Raleigh co-hosted the 2011 “Red Earth” Southern Regional Energy Assurance Exercise and Workshop in Raleigh, N.C. The exercise was attended by over 150 representatives from Federal, State and local governments, trade associations, and private industry. Attendees assessed the consequences, mitigation, and response to a series of simulated large-scale regional energy emergencies or supply

disruptions. The exercise allowed States to evaluate their State and local energy assurance plans, which are currently being developed by State Energy Offices and select local governments.

The event helped States and local communities undertake enhancements to their plans and address issues raised by the scenarios that may not have been addressed in their prior planning efforts. The exercise agenda included presentations from public and private sector experts on federal authorities, energy sector interdependencies, and energy infrastructures and markets in the areas of electricity, natural gas, petroleum products, and renewables.

This was the first of four regional energy assurance exercises scheduled to occur this year across the country. The regional exercises are designed for the States, territories, and local communities that received energy assurance planning grants from DOE. These grants have allowed States and select communities to hire and train staff, expand their capabilities to plan, mitigate the consequences of, and respond to a variety of energy emergencies and initiate longer term actions that will reduce risk and vulnerabilities and contribute to a more resilient energy infrastructure. Each regional exercise will be held in conjunction with an educational workshop on energy assurance planning. Future regional exercises will be held by invitation only in Boston, Chicago, and Phoenix. In addition, DOE plans to hold a national energy assurance conference in 2012.



Following this week’s energy assurance exercise, NASEO scheduled a national conference call on Thursday, March 3, 2011, to discuss the potential petroleum supply and price impacts associated with recent events in North Africa and the Middle East. Eighty individuals representing 38 States participated in this call and heard presentations from DOE on U.S. and International oil disruption contingency plans and the U.S. Energy Information Administration on Middle East and North African oil production and distribution. Current and former State Energy Office (SEO) directors also shared their experiences in responding to gasoline price spikes and severe petroleum supply disruptions in their States over the past 25 years. In addition, participants discussed what SEOs should consider as they assist in developing information for the public, media, governors, and other State and local agencies.

Jeff Pillon, NASEO’s Director of Energy Assurance Programs explained, “Whether you are dealing with a hypothetical energy emergency exercise or an actual energy emergency, communications and good situational awareness is critically important to gauging an appropriate level of response and coordination. Sound energy assurance planning and response significantly reduces the economic impact of energy supply disruptions and price spikes, and in more severe situations, can save lives and property.”