NERC Lessons Learned:

“Risk of Internet Accessible Cyber Assets”

“Preparing Circuit Breakers for Operation in Cold Weather”

“Loss of Substation Data Circuits to SCADA”

“Firewall Failure After Time Limit Exceeded”

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• Title
  – Risk of Internet Accessible Cyber Assets

• Source of Lesson Learned
  – Western Electric Coordinating Council

• Date Published
  – July 24, 2018
Problem Statement

- Internet-connected capacitor bank was compromised by unauthorized internet users for seven months prior to discovery
- Access point installed with weak password by a previous SCADA manager and never turned over to new manager
- Information posted to Russian-based media site and was infected with ransomware
- Compromise discovered after device was unable to be accessed
Lesson Learned

- Device removed from service and performed forensic analysis to identify all malware
- Virus scan was also performed on all devices at the same site
- Logs reviewed on all of the devices to look for anomalous activity
- Other locations also scanned to determine whether they had similar installations or issues
- Cyber assets need to be properly installed and secured per policies and procedures
• Title
  – Preparing Circuit Breakers for Operation in Cold Weather

• Source of Lesson Learned
  – Western Electric Coordinating Council

• Date Published
  – July 24, 2018
Problem Statement

- Two sequential B-phase faults occurred on a 500 kV line, apparently due to icing
- Three breakers failed, de-energizing an entire substation and tripping 1,150 MW nuclear plant off-line
- Breaker 1 opened properly for the first fault, but did not reclose correctly and was unable to respond to the second fault
- Breakers 2 and 3 failed to clear the fault quickly enough due to cold temperatures
Lesson Learned

- For Breaker 1, a defective motor contactor was discovered and replaced.
- For Breakers 2 and 3, the manufacturer engineered a fix consisting of additional thermostatically-controlled cabinet heaters that prevent moisture from freezing inside the pneumatic control valve during cold weather conditions.
- Breakers have several cold-temperature-related failure mechanisms.
- Good practice to annually perform pre-cold weather checks for cold-sensitive components.
• Title
  – Loss of Substation Data Circuits to SCADA

• Source of Lesson Learned
  – Northeast Power Coordinating Council

• Date Published
  – August 7, 2018
• During a scheduled transfer of its SCADA from the backup to the primary, all TelCo-provided remote substation data circuits lost.

• After maintenance work had been completed, the company directed the TelCo to transfer all data circuits back to the primary.

• The reconnection process failed resulting in a loss of operating and monitoring functionality for majority of substations.

• Major network outage and multiple hardware failures within the TelCo’s network.

• All issues resolved in about 8 hours.
Lesson Learned

- Schedule future SCADA data circuit transfers during daytime hours on business days
- Develop a script to disconnect and reconnect SCADA data circuits that splits the process into several blocks to mitigate risk of an outage to all of the TelCo-provided SCADA data circuits
- Collaboration with communication vendors who own and/or operate the circuits is essential
• Title
  – Firewall Failure After Time Limit Exceeded

• Source of Lesson Learned
  – Midwest Reliability Organization

• Date Published
  – August 7, 2018
Problem Statement

- Firewall firmware security patch issued by the firewall vendor was applied to equipment, which unknown to all parties at the time, contained a process runtime limit of 213.5 days.
- After reaching the 213.5 day limit of uptime, the entity experienced a loss of all SCADA-EMS RTU communications.
- Network administrator attempted to failover to the backup firewall but both firewalls were experiencing the same firmware issue.
- Two months prior to the event, the vendor had identified the runtime bug and notified their users via a “blog post”.
Lesson Learned

- Rebooted the backup firewall and forced a failover to restore network traffic and RTU communications
- Entity scheduled proactive reboots of the control center firewalls and other affected firewalls
- Firewall firmware was upgraded to a new release
- Maintain network devices on a planned schedule in accordance with the latest vendor information, security bulletins, technical bulletins, and other recommended updates
- If available, entities should enroll in automated notification services for these updates

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