

Chairman Jeff Duncan
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Field Hearing
“Enhancing America’s Grid Security and Resilience”

June 16, 2023

As prepared for delivery

Let me begin by welcoming everyone to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security’s field hearing, “Enhancing America’s Grid Security and Resilience.”

As the Subcommittee Chairman, I am excited to be here in Moore County, North Carolina with my colleagues, at the invitation of my friend and colleague on the Energy and Commerce Committee, Representative Richard Hudson.

The Energy and Commerce Committee exercises broad jurisdiction over Federal agencies and issues relating to the nation’s electric grid.

As part of these responsibilities, we work closely with the Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission – known as FERC – to ensure that our electric grid, and the utility companies that operate it, are well coordinated and prepared to address all hazards to the electric grid, whether they be severe weather, physical, or cybersecurity threats.

America’s power grid is the world’s most complex and highly interconnected system in the world. The challenge of protecting it is immense and growing, especially as our power mix shifts away from centralized coal and natural gas power plants, to more distributed wind, solar, and battery generation.

According to the Energy Information Administration, our nation’s power grid consists of more than 7,300 power plants, 160,000 miles of high-voltage power lines, millions of miles of low voltage power lines, and more than 50,000 substations where transformers convert the raw electricity to higher or lower voltages.

Historically, natural events, especially severe weather, present the greatest risk to system reliability and resilience. However, we are also facing the growing threat of physical and cyberattacks to our electric grid and other energy infrastructure, like pipelines and electric substations.

There have been several grid security incidents that have occurred recently that we are examining as part of our oversight responsibilities.

Within the last year, we have seen electrical transmission substations attacked in Tacoma, WA and here in Moore County. Both of these attacks resulted in blackouts that affected tens of thousands of people for multiple days.

Prior to these incidents, we saw one of the nation’s most critical pipelines, the Colonial Pipeline, suffer a cyberattack that created fuel shortages and price spikes that lasted weeks.

As Members of the Energy and Commerce Committee, we are taking a close look at these incidents to gather lessons-learned and to determine whether Federal laws or regulations should be revised to enhance grid security and resilience.

We are also gathering the perspectives of the electric industry and state partners, to learn how we can harden our grid, improve situational awareness, and support response efforts.

With that, I would like to welcome our witnesses and thank them for appearing before us today. I look forward to learning more about the substation attack that occurred here in Moore County so I can share lessons learned with the electric utilities and state officials in my home state of South Carolina and with my colleagues back in Washington, D.C.

Thank you, I yield back.