

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Energy
“DOE Modernization: The Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and
Emergency Response”
September 27, 2018

Today’s hearing is an important and timely opportunity to learn more about the Department of Energy’s efforts to protect our nation’s energy infrastructure against cyber threat and physical threats. Whether it is the constant cybersecurity attacks on our nation’s grid or the physical threats of emergencies such as hurricanes, it’s DOE’s job to ensure our critical energy infrastructure is secure from all hazards, and that energy is delivered to consumers throughout these situations.

Secretary Perry promised to strengthen the Department’s cyber and energy security capabilities, and he followed through with the establishment of a new office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, known as CESER. I want to welcome our witness today, Assistant Secretary Karen Evans, who was recently confirmed as head of the CESER office. I had the pleasure of speaking with Assistant Secretary Evans last week when the Administration released its National Cybersecurity Strategy. I look forward to hearing more from her on this new strategy and CESER’s role in it.

Protecting our nation’s energy infrastructure is critical to maintaining so much of the American way of life. The reliable supply and delivery of energy is vital to our nation’s economy, national security, and the public health and welfare of its citizens. With energy systems now massively digitized and interconnected,

new threats and vulnerabilities have emerged. It's a whole of government effort, but DOE, in particular, must be vigilant and prepared when it comes to ensuring energy access and delivery through cyber threats, physical threats, and emergency situations.

DOE has authority and responsibilities for the physical and cybersecurity of energy delivery systems based upon laws that Congress has passed and Presidential directives. Congress provided DOE with a wide range of emergency response and cybersecurity authorities, beginning with the Department of Energy Organization Act, and most recently with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act).

As the sector-specific agency for the energy, DOE has a crucial coordinating role to play in securing our energy infrastructure. Under Assistant Secretary Evans' leadership, we understand that CESER will work to bolster energy sector cybersecurity preparedness, coordinate cyber incident response and recovery, and accelerate research, development, and demonstration of more resilient energy delivery systems. When it comes to energy security and emergency response, this new office will analyze infrastructure vulnerabilities, recommend preventative measures, and help other agencies prepare for and respond to energy emergencies. CESER's ultimate mission is to mitigate the risk of energy disruptions. This includes DOE conducting emergency energy operations during a declared emergency or situation of national security.

When it comes to research, development, and demonstration of more resilient energy delivery systems, DOE's National Laboratories have tremendous capabilities that can be brought to bear. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit DOE's Idaho National Lab (INL), which utilizes cybersecurity researchers in collaboration with a broad range of industries and vendors to develop mitigation techniques and tools. INL also has a unique capability to test cyber and physical security applications on a full-scale electric grid.

Our nation's energy infrastructure is largely privately owned and operated; because of this, DOE works closely with energy sector owners and operators to better detect risks and mitigate against them. Specifically, CESER collaborates with government and private sector partners to develop technologies, tools, exercises, and other resources.

One example of DOE's efforts to strengthen public-private partnerships is through its Clear Path IV regional exercise. In April 2016, DOE hosted the Clear Path IV energy-focused disaster response exercise in my home state of Oregon. The exercise scenario consisted of a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami occurring along the 700-mile long Cascadia Subduction Zone, causing catastrophic damage. This two-day event in Portland and Washington, DC, included roughly 200 participants from federal, state, and local governments as well as electric sector and oil and gas industries participants. This exercise provided valuable insights and recommendations for the energy sector – on the government and industry sides – to improve policies, plans, and procedures for energy emergencies.

Today's hearing is of the utmost importance because the reliable and uninterrupted flow of energy impacts every aspect of our daily lives. I look forward to hearing more about DOE's new CESER office and its role in overseeing cybersecurity, energy security and emergency response for the energy sector.