

Y2K drill prepares for the real thing

by **Leslie Peterson** and **Don Nord**

On Sept. 8 and 9, many of your co-workers may be losing sleep working a midnight shift. Western and utilities across North America will use those dates to simulate the New Year's Eve Y2K rollover from Dec. 31 to Jan. 1, 2000. Sept. 9 (9/9/99) is also potential date for Y2K-related problems.

According to the North American Electricity Reliability Council, this real-time, nationwide exercise will provide utilities "an opportunity to rehearse key portions of their administrative, operations, communication and continuity response plans."



Much work completed

Western has been working closely with the Western Systems Coordinating Council and the Mid-Continent Area Power Pool (the two NERC regions where we operate), the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other utilities to inventory, remediate and test Y2K-sensitive systems and equipment.

"We've put a lot of work into getting the power system Y2K ready. The drill will let us deploy resources

and carry out

procedures planned for the transition period. It will be a chance to see how well things perform," noted **Bob Evans**, Y2K drill coordinator for Desert Southwest Region.

"It will also give us the opportunity to use alternate ways of communicating with neighboring utilities and security centers in a realistic setting," explained **Earl Cass**, Upper Great Plains Region drill coordinator.

During the drill, Western operations staff will respond to hypothetical scenarios of things that could go wrong. "During the scripted drill, we will work with other utilities to restore a system disturbance," pointed out **Chuck Weaver**, Rocky Mountain Region drill coordinator. "We'll also have a few 'surprises' for the operations staff—just to keep things interesting."

Grid status is key

Reporting on the status of the grid will be another key drill element. Participating utilities will use satellite phone links, microwaves and other forms of communication to update NERC security coordinators. Security coordinators will then relay this information to NERC's control center in the Department of Energy's Emergency Operations Center.

The EOC will, in turn, report to the governmentwide Information Coordinating Center. In addition, DOE requires its organizations to conduct and report drill activities beyond the electric power industry drill. Western will integrate NERC and DOE requirements.

"A few people may be a little bleary-eyed on Sept. 9," joked **Jasen Strutt**, Sierra Nevada Region drill coordinator. "But, the real value of the drill will be knowing that we have workable procedures in place before the real rollover and that everyone involved is familiar with his or her role."

(Note: Leslie Peterson is a public affairs specialist in Golden. Don Nord is Western's Y2K project manager)

