

Y2K drill a rousing success

Employees practice for rollover

by LaVerne Kyriss

To test procedures and contingency plans for the upcoming Y2K rollover, more than 200 Western employees joined 2,000 other utility workers for a nationwide drill on Sept. 8 and 9.

Western dispatchers operated the generation and transmission load control desks at our control centers. Crew members staffed essential substations and electrical facilities. Drill coordinators and observers tested the responses of exercise participants to a variety of scenarios and recorded their reactions.

"All four Western regions practiced their rollover contingency plans during the September drill," noted **Don Nord**, Western's Y2K project manager. "We simulated loss of a variety of our communication tools. These included loss of our SCADA data-gathering capabilities and control of remote facilities, loss of our commercial telephone lines, loss of our internal microwave communication system and loss of the primary communication link to the MAPP Security Center," said UPG Drill Coordinator **Earl Cass**. "During the drill we practiced using alternate communication methods, including satellite and cellular telephones and high-frequency and amateur ham radios."

While each region exercised its own scenarios, all regions participated with neighboring utilities and with the regional reliability council. "In California, we interact with the ISO, our customers, Reclamation and others. We used a roll-call procedure to gather necessary data needed by the dispatchers when they can't get the SCADA information. This worked really well," offered **Jasen Strutt**, Y2K coordinator at SN.

"We also injected an unknown event at Roseville Substation, which was not staffed by Western employees. This meant the dispatcher had to decide who to send to Roseville to find out what was going on," Strutt explained.

DSW drill planners devised an innovative

way to handle all the incoming data reports from crewmembers who were recording data at remote substations. "We set up a call center just off the dispatch room. We had three people there, including a dispatcher, to gather recordings such as net interchange and ACE (area control error)," noted **Bob Evans**, DSW's Y2K coordinator. "We had two people at 17 substations, and they had VHF handheld radios and cell phones as back-up

communications. We also had the dispatchers initiate communications with them so as not to overload our ability to record and respond to data."

The drill hosting the most dramatic events was scripted by **Chuck Weaver**, RM drill coordinator. RM staff responded to simulated generation and transmission losses that resulted in islanding—the transmission system breaking up into smaller segments. This condition required dispatchers to shed load to restore the interconnected system. Other scenarios at RM included bomb threats, severe weather conditions, a variety of communication system outages and an inquiry from a national news media outlet. These scenarios kept staff at Loveland and the RM substations busy for most of the evening.

"We pretty much ironed out all the bugs in our plans during the April drill so we were able to practice lots of events," Weaver said. "We did have a couple of administrative bugs that we were able to work out on the fly, so the test went well."

RM also maintained a telephone link to CSO during the drill. "Western hosts one of three regional security centers in the Western Systems Coordinating Council at RM. These centers have a direct link and backup communications with the other NERC security centers," said Nord. "This helps us keep posted on what's going on across our entire 17,000-mile transmission system."



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During both the drill and the actual rollover, CSO staff will provide periodic reports to the DOE Emergency Operations Center at the Forrestal Building. "DOE will further report critical information to a nationwide control center during the rollover," explained Nord. "The drill gave us a final opportunity to practice all our contingency plans."

All regions stopped drill activities from 11:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. local time so as not to interfere with any real-world rollover event. "Things went very smoothly for us during the rollover," said Cass. "This shows that all the testing, remediation and contingency planning are working."

"We threw a wide variety of drill scenarios at participants. People responded very professionally and implemented contingency plans smoothly," added Strutt.

"We expect Dec. 31st to be even quieter—well, maybe we'll do a count down to midnight to liven things up," joked Weaver. ☞



Bo Mortenson (left), a DSW lineman, and **Tom Plummer**, a DSW foreman II lineman, search in the dark for replacement insulators during a simulated outage drill.



Ron Bowersock (left), DSW dispatch manager, finds the warehouse key for **Tom Plummer**. Plummer and other linemen needed the key to search for needed equipment during the simulated outage.



Mike Gough, a power operations specialist in Watertown, operates the satellite phone link UGP used to contact the MAPP Security Center and other control areas within MAPP. Gough is reviewing a strip chart indicating frequency in the Eastern Interconnection after receiving a report from MAPP of a frequency spike.