



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

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**REGIONAL POWER  
COOPERATIVE**

Power Cooperative Automates  
Compliance Management  
for NERC Standards and  
Requirements

**AssurXECOS**

## AssurX Energy Compliance Platform Reduces Risk and Improves Visibility into the State of NERC Compliance

A Southeast power cooperative needed an energy compliance system to demonstrate ongoing compliance with over 400 requirements under 80 standards set forth by NERC. In addition, the organization needed to modernize its workflow processes to reduce complexity and risk while improving visibility. AssurX software gives the utility a high level of control over its compliance obligations, while also providing the flexibility to fine-tune their processes over time.



AssurX was selected to automate the entity's NERC compliance management and documentation systems, replacing paper and spreadsheets with a centralized system of integrated processes.

### **CUSTOMER: ENERGY PROVIDER FOR THE SOUTHEAST**

The customer is a generation and transmission electric cooperative providing power to counties in the Southeastern United States and operates out of multiple locations across the region.

### **NERC COMPLIANCE CHALLENGES**

Registered in the SERC region as several different generation, transmission, and distribution functions (DP, GO, GOP, PA/PC, RP, TO, TOP, TP), the customer is required to comply with over eighty standards mandated by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), including over **400 requirements**.

Managing compliance manually using paper and spreadsheet-based systems was impractical given the challenges of increasing regulation. The customer needed a way to minimize compliance risk as well as provide greater visibility into its state of compliance. This led to the search for a [NERC compliance management system](#) to help track standard requirements, manage assignment of tasks, and ensure their timely completion.

The cooperative needed an automated solution that would provide:

- Streamlined workflow processes to ensure secure and continuous compliance with a proliferation of NERC requirements
- The flexibility to easily add and adapt workflows to meet future compliance obligations
- Documented proof of compliance with those regulations to maintain audit readiness
- Automated completion of Reliability Standard Audit Worksheets (RSAWs) required as evidence of compliance with NERC standards

According to the cooperative's supervisor of compliance support, "We knew generally what we had to do, but we weren't really sure how to get there. Our priority was to move to a workflow-driven compliance system as quickly and efficiently as possible." As part of the implementation, the cooperative also needed to develop and fine-tune workflows to manage compliance requirements as well as generate documentation.

The AssurX system provides a high level of configurability and the ability to create custom workflows without any impact to the source code.



"Our priority was to move to a workflow-driven compliance system *as quickly and efficiently as possible*."

Supervisor of Compliance Support

### ASSURX SOLUTION

After a successful demo of [AssurX's Energy Compliance System \(ECOS\)\\*](#), the cooperative decided to implement the software to help manage compliance with all applicable NERC and regional regulations. As part of the process, they produced a plan that would allow them to dynamically leverage existing RSAW documentation to accelerate implementation.

"We utilized RSAWs from previous audits, both internal and external, to develop our basis of compliance and determine what our tasks were," explained the compliance supervisor. The goal was to develop a plan to track compliance based on each requirement. In addition, the plan incorporated input from subject matter experts (SMEs).

Based on this information, the customer developed a compliance plan consisting of:

- Requirement text
- The basis of compliance
- Presentable evidence
- The task which would generate the evidence
- The schedule or required timing for each task
- Classification of tasks as compliance requirements vs. internal controls
- Any internal controls required as part of the task

### STANDARDIZING EVIDENCE SCHEDULES

One challenge during implementation was producing a standard naming convention for evidence schedules. With multiple people contributing to evidence folders, the organization needed a straightforward way to standardize evidence collection names to minimize confusion and increase accuracy.

To address this challenge, each evidence schedule was referred to as a TASK, and assigned unique names containing abbreviated code referring to the originating standard and responsible department. The tasks also specify whether they are **compliance tasks** or **internal controls**. Finally, the customer configured a category of **administrative tasks** to easily differentiate them from standards being audited. AssurX's configuration features eliminated the need for custom code and simplified the process.

### COMPLIANCE OVERVIEW DASHBOARDS

The AssurX platform allowed the team to create custom compliance overview dashboards showing applicable requirements, evidence folders and scheduled tasks. Evidence folders are clearly labeled and contain:

- The NERC Standard, Requirement, and Measure
- Basis of Compliance / Compliance Narrative (for RSAW Generation)
- Schedules to Define the Evidence Collection Task
- Expected Evidence Produced

\*Formerly AssurX Energy & Utilities Enterprise Management (EUEM)

With multiple people contributing to evidence folders, the organization created a single "vocabulary" to standardize evidence collection names and enforce consistency.



"We made sure every department was engaged...We wanted to make sure everybody was on the same page from the very start."

Supervisor of Compliance Support

### WORKFLOW DESIGN

Creating task workflows and instructions was another important part of implementing the AssurX solution. The team used the AssurX ECOS platform's task instructions out of the box, with just a few changes to capture additional details.

The workflow includes assigning each task to an assignee, with approver number one typically listed as a manager or supervisor. It also assigns a second or final approver from the compliance department.

The team configured permissions-based access so that:

- Users can view and edit tasks assigned to them
- Certain departments have expanded viewing privileges
- Evidence is classified as *Confidential* vs. *Restricted*
- Management can view all evidence without editing it

### TRAINING STRATEGY

To get the team up to speed on the new system, the customer developed a set of user guides to help facilitate the on-boarding process. Training is required for user compliance, and covers topics including:

- Accessing tasks
- Completing tasks
- Uploading evidence
- Requesting signatures
- How to sign and close out tasks
- How to leverage user dashboards

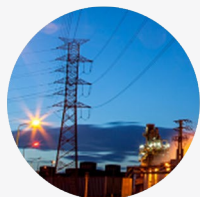
Prior to going live, they assigned at least one task for each working group to implement. "We made sure every department was engaged," explained the supervisor of compliance support. "We wanted to make sure everybody was on the same page from the very start."

### RESULTS

Implementing AssurX has given the electric cooperative visibility and control over all compliance obligations. The compliance plans, schedules, and clearly labeled evidence folders allow them to maintain a continuous state of audit readiness. The AssurX platform now enables the team to populate RSAWs with all required information, including:

- Names of SMEs
- Requirements
- Measures
- Questions
- Basis of Compliance
- Evidence of Compliance

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The dynamic, configurable nature of the AssurX architecture enables entities to build and connect unlimited processes with risk-focused internal controls that drive compliance, reliability, and efficient operations.

All information can be compiled from within the AssurX system to demonstrate compliance as needed. The system can also be used for tracking documents and issues related to missing evidence, using it for completion of RSAWs. Evidence folders are clearly labeled to streamline NERC audits, making it easy to pull up documentation of compliance.

The AssurX system provided a high level of configurability and the ability to create custom workflows **without any impact to the source code**. The cooperative's team was highly proactive in implementing the system, while leveraging the expertise of AssurX and the platform's configurability to build out processes quickly and efficiently.

AssurX's dynamic nature will enable the customer to rapidly scale up for future compliance projects and integrate seamlessly within the solution.

### CONCLUSION

A regional cooperative was able to make the transition from disconnected processes to a centralized, rules-driven compliance system with comprehensive pre-implementation planning and team engagement. The organization understood the importance of creating a sustainable solution through detailed process mapping, as well as building in consistency throughout the system for greater efficiency. The flexibility of the AssurX platform, combined with the commitment of the organization's internal team made the software implementation as seamless as possible. The ability to create and integrate virtually unlimited workflows will enable them to connect, control and change compliance documentation and processes to keep pace with ever-changing regulatory standards.

The collaboration during process mapping and development also helped AssurX build additional best practices into the AssurX ECOS platform, ultimately benefiting customers across the electric utility industry.

**SEE ASSURX ECOS IN ACTION.**  
Schedule a live online demonstration.

