

## CASE STUDY

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**BASIN ELECTRIC  
POWER COOPERATIVE**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Simplifying NERC  
compliance through  
automation

**AssurX**



Like many electric utilities, Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC) was struggling to keep up with an ever-expanding number of NERC requirements and tasks associated with meeting those requirements. Implementing AssurX Enterprise Energy Compliance System (ECOS) allowed the organization to improve visibility and efficiency of their compliance program, while setting the stage for future process improvements.

“When you start breaking down the tasks for each requirement, now you’re talking thousands of tasks across multiple business units to keep track of.”

*Dave Rudolph  
Manager of NERC compliance at BEPC*

#### **THE COMPANY: A LEADER IN DELIVERING RELIABLE ENERGY TO 9 STATES**

BEPC is a not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative made up of 140 member systems spanning nine states between the Canadian and Mexican borders. With a dedication to reliability, BEPC serves three million customers across 500,000 square miles, primarily in rural communities.

#### **MANAGING THE MOVING PIECES OF NERC COMPLIANCE**

BEPC is subject to roughly 60 NERC reliability standards, each one containing multiple requirements and sub-requirements.

“There are essentially hundreds if not close to a thousand requirements we’re required to comply with,” says Dave Rudolph, manager of NERC compliance at BEPC.

“When you start breaking down the tasks for each requirement, now you’re talking thousands of tasks across multiple business units to keep track of,” he adds.

Rudolph points out that many of the requirements have very specific timelines, and that noncompliance carries the risk of penalties of more than \$1 million per violation.

“We got to the point where we struggled to manage all of these moving pieces using spreadsheets and calendar reminders,” Rudolph says. “We knew we needed some sort of automation to keep track of everything.”



**“Some tasks are related to NERC compliance standards and requirements, but we also use it to capture evidence for other external requirements.”**

***Dave Rudolph  
Manager of NERC compliance at BEPC***

## **DEPLOYING AN AUTOMATED NERC COMPLIANCE SOLUTION**

Rudolph's team evaluated several software vendors, going through an RFP process and engaging in multiple product demonstrations.

What ultimately led them to choose AssurX, he says, is the fact that it checked all the boxes the organization was looking for in an automated solution, including:

- A built-in repository of NERC standards that can be connected to controls and evidence
- Integrated document management to simplify evidence collection and documentation
- The ability to schedule tasks at defined frequencies and send reminders when tasks are due

BEPC started its implementation with AssurX Document Management, which they use to centralize NERC compliance documentation such as policies, procedures, program documents, and other important records.

Initial efforts also included deploying AssurX Evidence Management to build out evidence schedules and capture recurring tasks for monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting.

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Throughout the process, AssurX and BEPC worked together to create an action plan in terms of which solutions they would implement first and what configuration options were needed. From there, the two groups engaged in weekly meetings to move the process forward, with AssurX providing support to ensure the system was updated and meet's the organization's needs.

“It's been a collaborative effort,” Rudolph says. “It's been working really well.”

Moving forward, BEPC is focused on implementing AssurX CAPA Management to track compliance issues. With this piece, BEPC is able to ensure that issues are monitored, mitigated, and reported in accordance with regulatory requirements, while also delivering greater reliability for customers.



**“The system keeps reminding us until that task has been completed, so that has been especially useful.”**

***Dave Rudolph  
Manager of NERC compliance at BEPC***

### **IMPROVING RELIABILITY WITH FOOLPROOF INTERNAL CONTROLS**

According to Rudolph, the BEPC team started seeing immediate benefits to the process in terms of visibility and efficiency.

“When I open the dashboard, I can see right away which tasks are due and any other upcoming items for me personally, my department, and the entire system,” he says. “Having that automatic visibility without having to constantly update a spreadsheet and produce your own report has been a huge benefit.”

Before implementing AssurX, Rudolph estimates his team spent at least 25% of their time just trying to track and coordinate all the activities needed to ensure compliance. Now, he says, that entire burden has been eliminated as a result of automated reminders and task management.

“The system keeps reminding us until that task has been completed, so that has been especially useful.”

AssurX Document Management has also simplified the document review process of reviewing documents on an annual or more frequent basis.

“With hundreds of documents, there are quite a few that you have to look at and update each month, so it’s been a good solution for us.”

Rudolph also notes that AssurX has improved BEPC’s compliance posture as NERC continues to intensify its focus on Internal Controls.

“I see the entire AssurX system as one giant internal control,” Rudolph says. “Automating the process, assigning tasks, and tracking them to completion adds several layers of Internal Controls, which just strengthens our compliance program as a whole.”



**“They like to see that we have an automated tool for tracking all of these compliance issues and tasks.”**

**Dave Rudolph**  
**Manager of NERC compliance at BEPC**

#### **ABOUT ASSURX INC.**

With decades of expertise built into our extensive quality management and regulatory compliance software, the AssurX Quality Management Software Platform helps companies maintain quality and compliance standards, streamline workflows, and better manage any enterprise. Our configurable software and understanding of users' needs produce a unique system that easily adapts and scales as a customers' business evolves. AssurX is an ideal partner for regulated companies looking for better operational control and efficiency while staying compliant. [Learn more.](#)

#### **MOVING INTO THE FUTURE WITH ASSURX**

While early stages of implementation have focused on rolling out the software for the organization's NERC compliance group, they're gradually expanding its use across BEPC.

Each month, the team adds more documents and evidence, and BEPC has also rolled out the solution to some of the cooperative's generation and transmission business units. The team also uses AssurX for monthly reporting to senior management, which has garnered positive feedback from leadership.

“They like to see that we have an automated tool for tracking all of these compliance issues and tasks,” he says.

He predicts that the AssurX system will give them a significant advantage during their next audit in terms of demonstrating a proactive approach to compliance.

“When you get into an audit, you get rapid-fire requests for information, so we're excited to use the tool for that, too,” says Rudolph.

In the future, BEPC will integrate ECOS with the organization's active directory to streamline the compliance process further. This will not only provide an added layer of security in terms of preventing unauthorized access, but will also eliminate the need to make access changes in two places.

“The more we continue to build out the system, dashboards, and metrics, the more valuable a resource it will be for keeping everyone on the same page,” says Rudolph.

As for what advice he would give to other electric utilities struggling to keep pace with compliance requirements, the answer is simple.

“It's tough to keep up in terms of getting everything done, but there are solutions and people that can help,” he says. “If anything, I wish I had pulled the trigger to implement AssurX even sooner.”

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