

RESOLUTION

ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSES AND SOLAR FLARES

WHEREAS, protecting the nation's electric power grid and ensuring a reliable and affordable supply of energy are key priorities for the electric power sector and state and federal governments; and

WHEREAS, the power grid is a complex, interconnected network of generation, transmission, distribution, control, and communication technologies that can be impacted by natural events—including weather, earthquakes and geomagnetic disturbances (GMDs) like those caused by solar flares—and by malicious events, like cyber or physical attacks including electromagnetic pulses (EMPs); and

WHEREAS, the electric and nuclear sectors are critical infrastructure providers with mandatory and enforceable standards to help protect the reliability and security of the power and grid assets they own and operate; and

WHEREAS, standards can ensure that every electric utility meets a baseline level of security and the electric industry also relies on close coordination and partnerships with federal law enforcement and security agencies to help defend against hostile nation-states or other attacks against the United States, including EMP threats from a nuclear device; and

WHEREAS, intentional, manmade EMPs, such as those from directed energy weapons or high-altitude nuclear blasts, and naturally occurring GMDs, such as those caused by solar flares, need to be assessed and addressed with appropriate mitigation and protection strategies implemented for each; and

WHEREAS, preventing an EMP event is a national security issue, as the planning and launching of a nuclear attack on U.S. critical infrastructure constitutes an act of war or terrorism, thus the federal government is primarily responsible for preventing a high-altitude EMP as a matter of national security; and

WHEREAS, reasonably cost effective technological solutions are emerging to protect from EMP threats that could be implemented in phases, starting with the greatest risks first;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Conference of State Legislatures urges members of Congress and the President of the United States to initiate and coordinate efforts with state governments and the electric power sector to implement plans and preparation for the protection of electric power generation, transmission and distribution assets from EMPs and geomagnetic disturbances (solar flares); first addressing those sectors most vulnerable and with the longest lead times for repair, and then by using a risk based assessment approach to harden the remainder of nation's electric production, transmission and distribution systems for resilience against, and recovery from, all types of malicious or naturally occurring events that could adversely impact the electric power grid.
