

## Align Release Notes

Release 7.0.0

Date of Deployment: May 18, 2024

### Background

Align and the Secure Evidence Locker (SEL) are tools used by NERC, Regional Entities, and registered entities in the conduct of the ERO Enterprise Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Program (CMEP). Initial training and training materials have been offered throughout the initial deployment of functionality (Releases 1, 2, 3, 4.0, and 4.5). Ongoing maintenance and enhancements to Align and the SEL (CMEP tools) will occur as needed to assure effective implementation of the CMEP. Maintenance may include modifications to correct existing objects, notifications, records, workflows, etc. Enhancements may include new or improved functionality, workflows, reports, etc. These changes are expected as these CMEP tools are adjusted from their initial deployment to provide additional user functionality, efficiency, and enhancements to usability.

### Purpose

As changes are implemented to the CMEP tools, training and training materials provided during initial deployment may no longer be accurate. As part of an effective communication plan and to assure the effectiveness of user training, NERC is providing detailed release notes in this report. These release notes include detailed information regarding what features are changing or being added, what users are impacted by the changes, and if current training materials are impacted and have been updated. Users are encouraged to familiarize themselves with any changes that impact features or workflows regularly used.

### Terminology

Ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the CMEP Tools is conducted using an adaptive and iterative software development process. Terminology used within this document may refer to various processes most users may be unfamiliar with.

**CEA:** Compliance Enforcement Authority

**COP:** Compliance Oversight Plan

**IRA:** Inherent Risk Assessment

**Module:** Used to refer to a set of features used within Align. As shown in [Figure 1](#), each item that can be selected from the My Align drop-down menu is a Module. *Example: Risk and Planning*

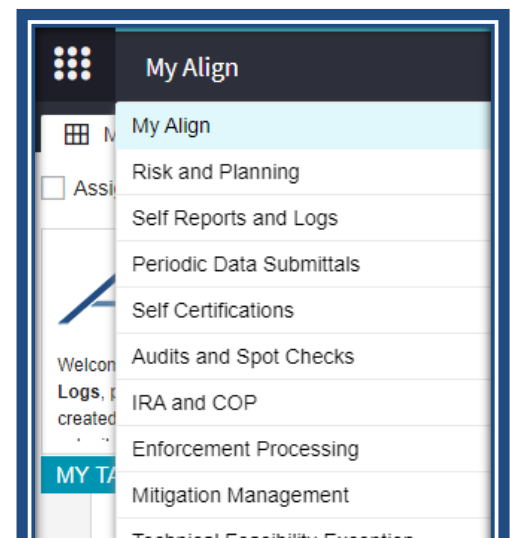
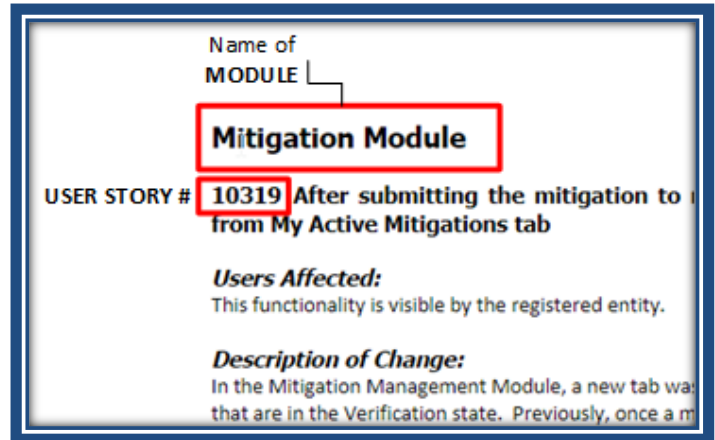


Figure 1: My Align Drop-Down Menu

**User Story #:** As shown in **Figure 2**, a unique number is used by the developers, NERC IT, and testers when referencing discrete changes. This number is used to aggregate all details, testing, and development information regarding a specific change. This number is not used by most CMEP tool users and users are not expected to become familiar or track these numbers. These numbers are provided for transparency purposes regarding changes and change controls. However, users may leverage these numbers to facilitate any follow up discussion, troubleshooting, testing, or IT support ticket details.



**Figure 2: Elements of a User Story**

## Enforcement Processing Module

### User Story # 7462

Description of Issue: Notifications – Registered Entity has been sent a Disposition Notification or Closure Notification that does not include all Noncompliance IDs

Users Affected: CEA, Registered Entity

Description of Change: When a CEA would issue a Disposition Notification or a Closure Notification to the Registered Entity, the old notifications would only include the initial Noncompliance ID instead of all relevant IDs. This update will ensure that the subject line and the body of the two email notifications include all relevant Noncompliance IDs that are associated with that Disposition object.

Training Materials Modified: N/A – this change is tied to the email notifications

## Mitigation Management Module

### User Story # 7682, 21409, 21458, 21459

Description of Issue: Mitigation Record and moving back from "Complete" state to "Verification" state

Users Affected: CEA, Registered Entity

Description of Change: This modification will allow the CEA to move the Mitigation record back from the "Complete" state to the "Verification" state for any newly created records after the code is deployed. When the CEA user moves the Mitigation record back to the "Verification" state, the CEA can include a comment for the Registered Entity to know why the Mitigation record was rolled back a state, an email will trigger to the Registered Entity so that they are aware of this change, and all users will see the Mitigation record in the "Verification" state. To roll back the Mitigation record, the CEA will need to open the Mitigation record from the "Completed Mitigations" tab in the Mitigation Management module. Once the record is open, the CEA needs to: (1) scroll down to the "Verification" section and click on the checkbox next to the "Send to Verification?" data field; (2) scroll down to the "Comments from Region and NERC" and add a comment to the "CEA Comments Shared with Entity" text box so that the Registered Entity knows why the Mitigation record was rolled back; and (3) click on the "Save and Action" button.

**NOTE, for any Mitigation records that were created prior to the deployment date, the CEA user will need to submit a support ticket to have NERC IT roll back the Mitigation record state. If the "Save and Action" button is not visible, this is a good indicator that the Mitigation record was created prior to the deployment and the CEA user will need to submit a support ticket to NERC IT.**

2024-00116

Verification

Date Certification Received	April 29, 2024	CEA Verification Action	Verified Complete
Has the scope of this issue expanded as a result of these mitigation steps?		Verification Incomplete	Comments Shared with Entity
Explanation			
Verification Complete Comments			
Send to Verification?	<input type="checkbox"/>		

2024-00116

Comments from Region and NERC

CEA Comments Shared with Entity

Paragraph

Comments to the Registered Entity letting them know why the Mitigation record was moved from "Complete" state to "Verification" state.

NERC Comments Shared with Entity

ERO Private Internal Notes

Attachments [Attach file](#)

Mitigation History

Workflow History

WORKFLOW STEP	DATE FROM	EXECUTED ON

[Save and Action](#) [Save](#) [Close](#)

Training Materials Modified: The CEA user guide will need to be updated to reflect the new functionality.

## Periodic Data Submittals (PDS) Module

### User Story # 10009

Description of Issue: Dates on Periodic Data Submittals and Self-Certifications did not default to the required minimums

Users Affected: CEA

Description of Change: For PDS records, three date fields were updated to certain default dates upon creating a new distribution by a CEA user.

- *Visibility* and *Start* Dates were changed to default to the current date when creating a new distribution.

- For Self-Certifications, the *End Date* was changed to default to Start Date + 30 Days from the current date.

Training Materials Modified: *The CEA User Guide will need to be updated.*

### **User Story # 11322**

Description of Issue: Issue with deleting a Registered Entity related draft Periodic Data Submittal

Users Affected: Registered Entity

Description of Change: A change was made to address an error stating that “Abort of lifecycle workflow is not allowed” when trying to delete a Registered Entity initiated Periodic Data Submittal. The change now allows the Registered Entity to delete draft Periodic Data Submittals which they created for Event-driven Periodic Data Submittals.

Training Materials Modified: *The CEA User Guide will need to be updated.*

### **User Story # 22418**

Description of Issue: Registered Entity users could save Periodic Data Submittal questions without providing an answer

Users Affected: Registered Entities

Description of Change: Validation logic was improved on PDS question forms to ensure the Registered Entity provides an answer to question(s) before submitting the final PDS. The entity user can save a draft with missing or blank answers to questions, but the PDS cannot be submitted if all questions are not completed. If an entity user attempts to submit the PDS without completing all questions, an error message is displayed, “It is not allowed to submit this Periodic Data Submittal without answering all the questions.”

Training Materials Modified: *The Registered Entity User Guide will need to be updated.*

## **Self-Certifications Module**

### **User Story # 10580**

Description of Issue: Several functions that should not have been in the selection list for Self-Certifications were displaying improperly

Users Affected: CEA

Description of Change: When selecting functions for a created Self-Certification distribution, the selection list displayed several functions that should not have been included, such as NERC, OC, RE, RRO, IA, LSE,

and PSE. The selected functions list was updated to remove these functions from the selection list, leaving only functions that are needed for Self-Certifications.

Training Materials Modified: *The CEA User Guide will need to be updated.*

### **User Story # 10707**

Description of Issue: Functions related to Self-Certifications were not auto-populating when a finding related to the Self-Certification was created

Users Affected: CEA

Description of Change: When creating a new finding related to a Self-Certification record, the applicable functions will now auto-populate in the draft finding form. These functions can be manually updated, but the CEA no longer needs to populate the list if the finding relates to all applicable functions.

Training Materials Modified: *The CEA User Guide will need to be updated.*

### **User Story # 12046**

Description of Issue: A request for additional information in the Related Findings portlet for Self-Certification modules was made. In addition, a reminder to submit draft findings was also needed.

Users Affected: CEA

Description of Change: Three new columns were added to the Related Findings portlet in Self-Certification records (CEA user view). These columns were Status, Start Date and Monitoring Method. This now provides additional information to help CEA users track related findings (draft Findings, self-reports, etc.). In addition, red text was added to the Review Comments section to remind CEA users to take additional actions outside of the Self-Certification module on related findings. The reminder text states, "Ensure any Draft Findings created by the CEA are submitted before closure of the Self-Cert. Draft Findings should be submitted from the Findings dashboard." (screenshot below)

Review Comments

Assigned Reviewer

Region comment

Region Response

Ensure any Draft Findings created by the CEA are submitted before closure of the Self-Cert. Draft Findings should be submitted from the Findings dashboard.

Send Notification of answer to entity?

Training Materials Modified: *The CEA User Guide will need to be updated.*

### **User Story # 18673**

Description of Issue: Self-Certification records were not displaying updates to the Point of Contact when it was changed

Users Affected: CEA and Registered Entities

Description of Change: The Point of Contact field now properly displays the Point of Contact and will reflect any changes made to that field once the Self-Certification record is in active status.

Training Materials Modified: None.

### **User Story # 22013**

Description of Issue: A request was made to add several column options for the *Completed* tab in the CEA Self-Certification module

Users Affected: CEA

Description of Change: Several options for additional column views were added to the *Completed* tab in the Self-Certification module. These options include Review Completed Date, Visibility Date, Submission Due Date, Submission Date and Request for Extension. These columns are not part of the default view and will not be persistent between log ins. The user must add the column(s) each time the Completed tab is viewed. In addition, this change also added a count indication for the Requests for Extension column and allows the CEA to quickly assess how many RFEs are associated with a Self-Certification record.

Training Materials Modified: *The CEA User Guide will need to be updated.*

### **User Story # 22419**

Description of Issue: Registered Entity users could save Self-Certification questions without providing an answer

Users Affected: Registered Entities

Description of Change: Additional validation was added to Self-Certification question forms to ensure that the Registered Entity provides an answer to the question before being able to save the final answer. The entity can still save a draft with missing answers but will not be able to submit the Self-Certification without answering all questions.

Validation logic was improved on Self-Certification question forms to ensure the Registered Entity provides an answer to question(s) before submitting the final Self-Certification. The entity user can save a draft with missing or blank answers to questions, but the Self-Certification cannot be submitted if all questions are not completed. If an entity user attempts to submit the Self-Certification without completing all questions, an error message is displayed, "It is not allowed to submit this Self-Certification without answering all the questions."

Training Materials Modified: *The Registered Entity User Guide will need to be updated.*

### **User Story # 22425**

Description of Issue: Questionnaires were previously displayed down to the Part level of the Requirements. This required excessive administrative burden to respond to all questions in a Self-Certification record.

Users Affected: Registered Entities

Description of Change: It was requested that Self-Certifications be answered at the Standard or Requirement level rather than at the Part level, due to the extensive administrative burden on an entity user. A change was made to create Self-Certification responses at the Requirement level, which reduces the administrative burden of responding to large scoped Self-Certifications. This reduces the burden of both assigning users to answer questions as well as responding to the questions.

Training Materials Modified: *None.*

## **Other Module**

### **User Story # 10412, 18938, 21721**

Description of Issue: My Align Dashboard issues

Users Affected: CEA, NERC, Registered Entity

Description of Change: A number of issues were reported for My Align Dashboard issues, including CEA users seeing records applicable to a different region; sorting and filtering caused dashboard to go blank; Registered Entity My Tasks duplicated records in view (e.g., RFIs); and NERC users saw duplicated records in the dashboard view. The My Align Dashboards for CEA and NERC users were updated to address these issues and a system re-sync was performed as part of the maintenance activities on May 18, 2024.

Training Materials Modified: n/a



## Appendix A – Table of User Stories

ID	Chapter	Title
7462	Enforcement Processing	Notifications – Registered Entity has been sent a Disposition Notification or Closure Notification that does not include all Noncompliance IDs
7682	Mitigation Management	Mitigation Record and moving back from "Complete" state to "Verification" state
21409	Mitigation Management	Mitigation Record and moving back from "Complete" state to "Verification" state
21458	Mitigation Management	Mitigation Record and moving back from "Complete" state to "Verification" state
21459	Mitigation Management	Mitigation Record and moving back from "Complete" state to "Verification" state
10009	PDS	Dates on Periodic Data Submittals and Self-Certifications did not default to the required minimums
10125	PDS	Validation of Monitoring Period Start and End Dates not working properly in Periodic Data Submittal module
11322	PDS	Issue with deleting a Registered Entity related draft Periodic Data Submittal
22418	PDS	Registered Entity users could save Periodic Data Submittal questions without providing an answer
10580	Self-Certification	Several functions that should not have been in the selection list for Self-Certifications were displaying improperly
10707	Self-Certification	Functions related to Self-Certifications were not auto-populating when a finding related to the Self-Certification was created
12046	Self-Certification	A request for additional information in the Related Findings portlet for Self-Certification modules was made. In addition, a reminder to submit draft findings was also needed.
18673	Self-Certification	Self-Certification records were not displaying updates to the Point of Contact when it was changed
22013	Self-Certification	A request was made to add several column options for the CEA Completed tab in the Self-Certification module
22419	Self-Certification	Registered Entity users could save Self-Certification questions without providing an answer
22425	Self-Certification	Questionnaires were displayed down to the Part level of the Standard and Requirements. This required excessive administrative burden to answer all questions in a Self-Certification record.
10412	My Align Dashboard	My Align Dashboard issues
18938	My Align Dashboard	My Align Dashboard issues
21721	My Align Dashboard	My Align Dashboard issues

## Appendix B – Revision History

Revision History		
Version	Date	Revision Details
1.0	5/18/2024	Initial Draft