

**Reliability Standard Audit Worksheet[[1]](#footnote-2)**

# FAC-003-5 – Transmission Vegetation Management

This section must be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Audit ID:** | Audit ID if available; or REG-NCRnnnnn-YYYYMMDD |
| **Registered Entity:** | Registered name of entity being audited |
| **NCR Number:** | NCRnnnnn |
| **Compliance Enforcement Authority:** | Region or NERC performing audit |
| **Compliance Assessment Date(s)[[2]](#footnote-3):** | Month DD, YYYY, to Month DD, YYYY |
| **Compliance Monitoring Method:** | [On-site Audit | Off-site Audit | Spot Check] |
| **Names of Auditors:** | Supplied by CEA |
| **Audit ID:** | Audit ID if available; or REG-NCRnnnnn-YYYYMMDD |
| **Registered Entity:** | Registered name of entity being audited |

**Applicability of Requirements**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **BA** | **DP** | **GO** | **GOP** | **PA/PC** | **RC** | **RP** | **RSG** | **TO** | **TOP** | **TP** | **TSP** |
| **R1** |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |
| **R2** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **R3** |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |
| **R4** |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |
| **R5** |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **R6** |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **R7** |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |

**Legend:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Text entry area with blue background: | Fixed text – do not edit |
| Text entry area with green background: | Entity-supplied information |
| Text entry area with white background: | Auditor-supplied information |

Findings

**(This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Req.** | **Finding** | **Summary and Documentation** | **Functions Monitored** |
| **R1** |  |  |  |
| **R2** |  |  |  |
| **R3** |  |  |  |
| **R4** |  |  |  |
| **R5** |  |  |  |
| **R6** |  |  |  |
| **R7** |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Req.** | **Areas of Concern** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Req.** | **Recommendations** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Req.** | **Positive Observations** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Subject Matter Experts

Identify the Subject Matter Expert(s) responsible for this Reliability Standard.

**Registered Entity Response (Required; Insert additional rows if needed):**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SME Name** | **Title** | **Organization** | **Requirement(s)** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

R1 Supporting Evidence and Documentation

**R1.** Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner shall manage vegetation to prevent encroachments into the Minimum Vegetation Clearance Distance (MVCD) of its applicable line(s), operating within their Rating and all Rated Electrical Operating Conditions of the types shown below[[3]](#footnote-4):

* 1. An encroachment into the MVCD as shown in FAC-003-Table 2, observed in Real-time, absent a Sustained Outage, [[4]](#footnote-5)
  2. An encroachment due to a fall-in from inside the ROW that caused a vegetation-related Sustained Outage, [[5]](#footnote-6)
  3. An encroachment due to the blowing together of applicable lines and vegetation located inside the ROW that caused a vegetation-related Sustained Outage, 4
  4. An encroachment due to vegetation growth into the MVCD that caused a vegetation-related Sustained Outage. 4

## M1. Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner has evidence that it managed vegetation to prevent encroachment into the MVCD as described in R1. Examples of acceptable forms of evidence may include dated attestations, dated reports containing no Sustained Outages associated with encroachment types 2 through 4 above, or records confirming no Real-time observations of any MVCD encroachments.

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Question:** Does the applicable entity have any Facilities meeting the criteria in Applicability Sections 4.2. and/or 4.3?

Yes  No

If Yes, provide a list and quantity Facility types as shown in Applicability Sections 4.2 and /or 4.3. If No, explain how the entity made this determination.

[Note: A separate spreadsheet or another document may be used. If so, provide the document reference below.]

**Question:**  Did the applicable entity have any encroachment (Types 1.1-1.4) into the MVCD of its applicable line(s) in the audit period?  Yes  No If Yes, describe the encroachment(s). If No, explain how the entity made this determination.

[Note: A separate spreadsheet or another document may be used. If so, provide the document reference below.]

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Compliance Narrative:**

Provide a brief explanation, in your own words, of how you comply with this Requirement. References to supplied evidence, including links to the appropriate page, are recommended.

**Evidence Requested[[6]](#endnote-2):**

|  |
| --- |
| **Provide the following evidence, or other evidence to demonstrate compliance.** |
| Process for managing vegetation to prevent encroachments. Documentation to support process for managing vegetation. |

**Registered Entity Evidence (Required):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The following information is requested for each document submitted as evidence. Also, evidence submitted should be highlighted and bookmarked, as appropriate, to identify the exact location where evidence of compliance may be found.** | | | | | |
| **File Name** | **Document Title** | **Revision or Version** | **Document Date** | **Relevant Page(s) or Section(s)** | **Description of Applicability of Document** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Audit Team Evidence Reviewed (This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority):**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Compliance Assessment Approach Specific to FAC-003-5, R1**

***This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Verify the entity manages vegetation to prevent encroachments of type 1.1 through 1.4. |
|  | Verify the entity manages the inventory of applicable Facilities and the relationship of those Facilities within its vegetation management activities. |
| **Note to Auditor:** Review the definition of ROW and understand the impact when entity is evaluating “encroachment.” | |

**Auditor Notes:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

R2 Supporting Evidence and Documentation

**R2**. [Reserved for future use]

**M2**. [Reserved for future use]

R3 Supporting Evidence and Documentation

**R3.** Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner shall have documented maintenance strategies or procedures or processes or specifications it uses to prevent the encroachment of vegetation into the MVCD of its applicable lines that accounts for the following:

* 1. Movement of applicable line conductors under their Rating and all Rated Electrical Operating Conditions;
  2. Inter-relationships between vegetation growth rates, vegetation control methods, and inspection frequency.

**M3.** The maintenance strategies or procedures or processes or specifications provided demonstrate that the applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner can prevent encroachment into the MVCD considering the factors identified in the requirement.

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Compliance Narrative:**

Provide a brief explanation, in your own words, of how you comply with this Requirement. References to supplied evidence, including links to the appropriate page, are recommended.

**Evidence Requested**i**:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Provide the following evidence, or other evidence to demonstrate compliance.** |
| Documented maintenance strategies or procedures, processes, or specifications used to prevent encroachment of vegetation. |
| Demonstration of approach to support Parts 3.1 and 3.2 |

**Registered Entity Evidence (Required):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The following information is requested for each document submitted as evidence. Also, evidence submitted should be highlighted and bookmarked, as appropriate, to identify the exact location where evidence of compliance may be found.** | | | | | |
| **File Name** | **Document Title** | **Revision or Version** | **Document Date** | **Relevant Page(s) or Section(s)** | **Description of Applicability of Document** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Audit Team Evidence Reviewed (This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority):**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Compliance Assessment Approach Specific to FAC-003-5, R3**

***This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Verify the entity has documented maintenance strategies, procedures, processes, or specifications it uses to prevent the encroachment of vegetation into the MVCD of its applicable lines that accounts for the following: |
|  | (Part 3.1) Consideration of movement of applicable line conductors under their Rating and all Rated Electrical Operating Conditions; |
|  | (Part 3.2) Consideration of inter-relationships between vegetation growth rates, vegetation control methods, and inspection frequency. |
|  | Review that entity considers different biomes (e.g., desert, mountains, water proximity, tree types/locales, urban areas, rural areas, agricultural areas, etc.) and environmental impacts (e.g., rainfall, ice, etc.) within footprint. |
|  | Review that entity considers different prevention methods, as needed, for different vegetation (e.g., kudzu versus pine trees versus weeping willow) |
| **Note to Auditor:** | |

**Auditor Notes:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

R4 Supporting Evidence and Documentation

**R4.** Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner, without any intentional time delay, shall notify the control center holding switching authority for the associated applicable line when the applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner has confirmed the existence of a vegetation condition that is likely to cause a Fault at any moment.

**M4.** Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner that has a confirmed vegetation condition likely to cause a Fault at any moment will have evidence that it notified the control center holding switching authority for the associated transmission line without any intentional time delay. Examples of evidence may include control center logs, voice recordings, switching orders, clearance orders and subsequent work orders.

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Question:** Has the applicable entity confirmed the existence of a vegetation condition that is likely to cause a Fault at any moment for any Facilities meeting the criteria in Applicability Sections 4.2. and/or 4.3 within the compliance monitoring period?

Yes  No

If Yes, list the event(s) and provide a short narrative description of each. If No, explain how the entity made this determination.

[Note: A separate spreadsheet or another document may be used. If so, provide the document reference below.]

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Compliance Narrative:**

Provide a brief explanation, in your own words, of how you comply with this Requirement. References to supplied evidence, including links to the appropriate page, are recommended.

**Evidence Requestedi:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Provide the following evidence, or other evidence to demonstrate compliance.** |
| Evidence of notification to the applicable control center without intentional time delay for any confirmed event(s) where the existence of a vegetation condition was likely to cause a Fault at any moment. |
| Process(es) for identifying the existence of a vegetation condition that is likely to cause a Fault at any moment. |
| Process(es) for notifying the control center holding switching authority after confirming the existence of a vegetation condition that is likely to cause a Fault at any moment. |

**Registered Entity Evidence (Required):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The following information is requested for each document submitted as evidence. Also, evidence submitted should be highlighted and bookmarked, as appropriate, to identify the exact location where evidence of compliance may be found.** | | | | | |
| **File Name** | **Document Title** | **Revision or Version** | **Document Date** | **Relevant Page(s) or Section(s)** | **Description of Applicability of Document** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Audit Team Evidence Reviewed (This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority):**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Compliance Assessment Approach Specific to FAC-003-5, R4**

***This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Verify the entity notified the applicable control center for an applicable Facility without any intentional time delay when the confirmation of the existence of a vegetation condition likely to cause a Fault at any moment has been determined. |
|  | If the vegetation condition was discovered determine how it was discovered (e.g., a Vegetation Inspection, a field observation report, etc.) |
|  | If a vegetation condition was discovered review vegetation management reports for the applicable Facility and the relationship to the processes called out in Requirement R3 as needed. |
| **Note to Auditor:** | |

**Auditor Notes:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

R5 Supporting Evidence and Documentation

**R5.** When an applicable Transmission Owner and an applicable Generator Owner are constrained from performing vegetation work on an applicable line operating within its Rating and all Rated Electrical Operating Conditions, and the constraint may lead to a vegetation encroachment into the MVCD prior to the implementation of the next annual work plan, then the applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner shall take corrective action to ensure continued vegetation management to prevent encroachments.

**M5.** Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner has evidence of the corrective action taken for each constraint where an applicable transmission line was put at potential risk. Examples of acceptable forms of evidence may include initially-planned work orders, documentation of constraints from landowners, court orders, inspection records of increased monitoring, documentation of the de-rating of lines, revised work orders, invoices, or evidence that the line was de-energized.

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Question:** Has the applicable entity been constrained from performing vegetation work on an applicable line that could have led to vegetation encroachment of the MVCD prior to implementation of the next annual work plan?

Yes  No

If Yes, describe the event(s) and what actions were taken to prevent vegetation encroachment. If No, explain how the entity made this determination.

[Note: A separate spreadsheet or another document may be used. If so, provide the document reference below.]

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Compliance Narrative:**

Provide a brief explanation, in your own words, of how you comply with this Requirement. References to supplied evidence, including links to the appropriate page, are recommended.

**Evidence Requestedi:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Provide the following evidence, or other evidence to demonstrate compliance.** |
| Process by which a constraint is declared for vegetation work. |
| Documentation of constraint that prevented vegetation work (as applicable). |
| Documentation of corrective action plans (as applicable). |

**Registered Entity Evidence (Required):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The following information is requested for each document submitted as evidence. Also, evidence submitted should be highlighted and bookmarked, as appropriate, to identify the exact location where evidence of compliance may be found.** | | | | | |
| **File Name** | **Document Title** | **Revision or Version** | **Document Date** | **Relevant Page(s) or Section(s)** | **Description of Applicability of Document** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Audit Team Evidence Reviewed (This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority):**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Compliance Assessment Approach Specific to FAC-003-5, R5**

***This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Verify the entity documented the constraint, determined how a vegetation encroachment into the MVCD may occur prior to the next annual work plan, and took any corrective actions to prevent encroachment. |
| **Note to Auditor:** | |

**Auditor Notes:**

R6 Supporting Evidence and Documentation

**R6.** Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner shall perform a Vegetation Inspection of 100% of its applicable transmission lines (measured in units of choice - circuit, pole line, line miles or kilometers, etc.) at least once per calendar year and with no more than 18 calendar months between inspections on the same ROW[[7]](#footnote-7).

**M6.** Each applicable Transmission Owner and applicable Generator Owner has evidence that it conducted Vegetation Inspections of the transmission line ROW for all applicable lines at least once per calendar year but with no more than 18 calendar months between inspections on the same ROW. Examples of acceptable forms of evidence may include completed and dated work orders, dated invoices, or dated inspection records.

## Registered Entity Response (Required):

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Question:** Did the applicable entity perform a Vegetation Inspection on 100% of the Facilities meeting the criteria in Applicability Sections 4.2. and/or 4.3?

Yes  No

If Yes, provide a description of how the applicable entity maintains an accurate inventory of applicable Facilities and status of the Vegetation Inspections. If No, explain how the entity made this determination.

[Note: A separate spreadsheet or another document may be used. If so, provide the document reference below.]

**Question:**  Did the applicable entity use general line inspections as part of its Vegetation Inspection efforts?

Yes  No

If Yes, describe what the expectations for vegetation management observations (and reporting) are within general line inspections. If No, explain how why general line inspections are not used.

[Note: A separate spreadsheet or another document may be used. If so, provide the document reference below.]

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Compliance Narrative:**

Provide a brief explanation, in your own words, of how you comply with this Requirement. References to supplied evidence, including links to the appropriate page, are recommended.

**Evidence Requestedi:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Provide the following evidence, or other evidence to demonstrate compliance.** |
| Process used to perform Vegetation Inspections for applicable Facilities. |
| Documentation used to demonstrate performance of Vegetation Inspections. |
| If requested, process “walk throughs” for Vegetation Inspections including tool usage (e.g., Maximo), inventory updates, template updates (if applicable), checklists, or any other actions/tools used for Vegetation Inspections |

**Registered Entity Evidence (Required):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The following information is requested for each document submitted as evidence. Also, evidence submitted should be highlighted and bookmarked, as appropriate, to identify the exact location where evidence of compliance may be found.** | | | | | |
| **File Name** | **Document Title** | **Revision or Version** | **Document Date** | **Relevant Page(s) or Section(s)** | **Description of Applicability of Document** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Audit Team Evidence Reviewed (This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority):**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Compliance Assessment Approach Specific to FAC-003-5, R6**

***This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Verify the entity’s process/tools used for Vegetation Inspections. |
|  | Verify the entity’s Vegetation Inspection performance considerations capture Facilities within the same ROW, provide for review of applicable Facility inventory, and do not exceed 18 calendar months between inspections on the same ROW. |
| **Note to Auditor:** The Requirement calls out for the entity to perform a Vegetation Inspection of 100% of its applicable transmission lines. For smaller entities reviewing 100% may be an effective approach to determining compliance. For larger entities, an auditor should focus on internal controls and the process that the entity uses to manage its inventory. The internal controls can be reviewed for implementation effectiveness through judgmental sampling based on the risks posed by applicable Facilities. For larger entities, a higher amount of inventory requires substantial efforts by the entity. Reviewing internal controls for a Vegetation Inspection process should support an auditor’s need to see a representative sample of Vegetation Inspection related materials to reach reasonable assurance for this Requirement. | |

**Auditor Notes:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

R7 Supporting Evidence and Documentation

**R7.** Each applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner shall complete 100% of its annual vegetation work plan of applicable lines to ensure no vegetation encroachments occur within the MVCD. Modifications to the work plan in response to changing conditions or to findings from vegetation inspections may be made (provided they do not allow encroachment of vegetation into the MVCD) and must be documented. The percent completed calculation is based on the number of units actually completed divided by the number of units in the final amended plan (measured in units of choice - circuit, pole line, line miles or kilometers, etc.) Examples of reasons for modification to annual plan may include:

* 1. Change in expected growth rate/ environmental factors
  2. Circumstances that are beyond the control of an applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner[[8]](#footnote-8)
  3. Rescheduling work between growing seasons
  4. Crew or contractor availability/ Mutual assistance agreements
  5. Identified unanticipated high priority work
  6. Weather conditions/Accessibility
  7. Permitting delays
  8. Land ownership changes/Change in land use by the landowner
  9. Emerging technologies

**M7.** Each applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner has evidence that it completed its annual vegetation work plan for its applicable lines. Examples of acceptable forms of evidence may include a copy of the completed annual work plan (as finally modified), dated work orders, dated invoices, or dated inspection records.

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Question:** Has the applicable entity had to modify an annual vegetation work plan during the compliance monitoring period?

Yes  No

If Yes, provide a description of the modification(s) list and any subsequent efforts to complete the planned work. If No, explain how the entity would make modifications and ensure completion of the vegetation work plan.

[Note: A separate spreadsheet or another document may be used. If so, provide the document reference below.]

**Registered Entity Response (Required):**

**Compliance Narrative:**

Provide a brief explanation, in your own words, of how you comply with this Requirement. References to supplied evidence, including links to the appropriate page, are recommended.

**Evidence Requestedi:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Provide the following evidence, or other evidence to demonstrate compliance.** |
| Annual vegetation work plan for the compliance monitoring period (subject to sampling by the CEA). |
| Process used to determine, and ensure 100% completion of, the annual vegetation work plan. |
| Describe any documented relationship to Vegetation Inspections and the impact on the annual vegetation work plan. |
| Documentation of modifications to the annual vegetation work plan. |
| Demonstration of the percent completed calculation and how inputs to the calculation are managed (e.g., If using circuits, what defines a circuit and how does the entity update the number of circuits applicable in its vegetation management efforts.) |

**Registered Entity Evidence (Required):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The following information is requested for each document submitted as evidence. Also, evidence submitted should be highlighted and bookmarked, as appropriate, to identify the exact location where evidence of compliance may be found.** | | | | | |
| **File Name** | **Document Title** | **Revision or Version** | **Document Date** | **Relevant Page(s) or Section(s)** | **Description of Applicability of Document** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Audit Team Evidence Reviewed (This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority):**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Compliance Assessment Approach Specific to FAC-003-5, R7**

***This section to be completed by the Compliance Enforcement Authority***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Verify the entity has an annual vegetation work plan for the compliance monitoring period and it has been completed per R7. |
|  | If applicable, review the reasons for modification(s) to the annual vegetation work plan are documented and efforts to address the modified aspects are in place (e.g., if not in year 1 vegetation work plan did the Facility move to year 2 plan?) |
|  | Verify the entity manages its inventory appropriately to provide an accurate percent completed calculation. |
| **Note to Auditor:** Auditor should rely on professional judgment to accurately identify and select a sample of transmission lines ROWs that traverse the major biomes within the applicable entity’s footprint. Auditors should consider biome conditions such as climate, geography, elevation, botany, population density, and land uses when selecting the sample transmission lines. For smaller entities reviewing 100% may be an effective approach to determining compliance. For larger entities, an auditor should focus on internal controls and the process that the entity uses to manage its inventory within the annual vegetation work plan. The internal controls can be reviewed for implementation effectiveness through judgmental sampling based on the risks posed by applicable Facilities. For larger entities, a higher amount of inventory requires substantial efforts by the entity. Reviewing internal controls within the annual vegetation work plan process should support an auditor’s need to see a representative sample vegetation work plan related materials to reach reasonable assurance for this Requirement. | |

**Auditor Notes:**

**Additional Information**

The definition of right-of-way (ROW) is: “The corridor of land under a transmission line(s) needed to operate the line(s). The width of the corridor is established by engineering or construction standards as documented in either construction documents, pre-2007 vegetation maintenance records, or by the blowout standard in effect when the line was built. The ROW width in no case exceeds the applicable Transmission Owner’s or applicable Generator Owner’s legal rights but may be less based on the aforementioned criteria.” NERC Glossary of Terms, available at [Standards (nerc.com)](https://www.nerc.com/pa/Stand/Pages/default.aspx).

Reliability Standard



The full text of FAC-003-5 may be found on the NERC Website (www.nerc.com) under “Program Areas & Departments”, “Reliability Standards.”

In addition to the Reliability Standard, there is an applicable Implementation Plan available on the NERC Website.

In addition to the Reliability Standard, there is background information available on the NERC Website.

Capitalized terms in the Reliability Standard refer to terms in the NERC Glossary, which may be found on the NERC Website.

## Sampling Methodology

Sampling is essential for auditing compliance with NERC Reliability Standards since it is not always possible or practical to test 100% of either the equipment, documentation, or both, associated with the full suite of enforceable standards. The Sampling Methodology Guidelines and Criteria (see NERC website), or sample guidelines, provided by the Electric Reliability Organization help to establish a minimum sample set for monitoring and enforcement uses in audits of NERC Reliability Standards.

## Regulatory Language

In the United States, Reliability Standard FAC-003-5 was approved in a letter order issued by FERC on March 4, 2022 in Docket No. RD22-2-000.

Finally, the revised clearances in Table 2 of FAC-003-3 were moved into the text of the FAC-003-4 and that MVCD values were added for elevations up to 15,000 feet, but that no other substantive changes were made to the Reliability Standard FAC-003-3.

Revision History

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date** | **Reviewers** | **Revision Description** |
| 1 | 3/27/2024 | NERC Compliance Assurance, OPCTF | New Document |
| 2 | 8/16/2024 | NERC Compliance Assurance | Correction and update of Requirement 4 – Evidence Requested |

1. NERC developed this Reliability Standard Audit Worksheet (RSAW) language in order to facilitate NERC’s and the Regional Entities’ assessment of a registered entity’s compliance with this Reliability Standard. The NERC RSAW language is written to specific versions of each NERC Reliability Standard. Entities using this RSAW should choose the version of the RSAW applicable to the Reliability Standard being assessed. While the information included in this RSAW provides some of the methodology that NERC has elected to use to assess compliance with the requirements of the Reliability Standard, this document should not be treated as a substitute for the Reliability Standard or viewed as additional Reliability Standard requirements. In all cases, the Regional Entity should rely on the language contained in the Reliability Standard itself, and not on the language contained in this RSAW, to determine compliance with the Reliability Standard. NERC’s Reliability Standards can be found on NERC’s website. Additionally, NERC Reliability Standards are updated frequently, and this RSAW may not necessarily be updated with the same frequency. Therefore, it is imperative that entities treat this RSAW as a reference document only, and not as a substitute or replacement for the Reliability Standard. It is the responsibility of the registered entity to verify its compliance with the latest approved version of the Reliability Standards, by the applicable governmental authority, relevant to its registration status.

   The NERC RSAW language contained within this document provides a non‑exclusive list, for informational purposes only, of examples of the types of evidence a registered entity may produce or may be asked to produce to demonstrate compliance with the Reliability Standard. A registered entity’s adherence to the examples contained within this RSAW does not necessarily constitute compliance with the applicable Reliability Standard, and NERC and the Regional Entity using this RSAW reserves the right to request additional evidence from the registered entity that is not included in this RSAW. Additionally, this RSAW includes excerpts from FERC Orders and other regulatory references. The FERC Order cites are provided for ease of reference only, and this document does not necessarily include all applicable Order provisions. In the event of a discrepancy between FERC Orders, and the language included in this document, FERC Orders shall prevail. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Compliance Assessment Date(s): The date(s) the actual compliance assessment (on-site audit, off-site spot check, etc.) occurs. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. This requirement does not apply to circumstances that are beyond the control of a applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner subject to this reliability standard, including natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires, tornados, hurricanes, landslides, wind shear, fresh gale, major storms as defined either by the applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner or an applicable regulatory body, ice storms, and floods; human or animal activity such as logging, animal severing tree, vehicle contact with tree, or installation, removal, or digging of vegetation. Nothing in this footnote should be construed to limit the Transmission Owner’s or applicable Generator Owner’s right to exercise its full legal rights on the ROW. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. If a later confirmation of a Fault by the applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner shows that a vegetation encroachment within the MVCD has occurred from vegetation within the ROW, this shall be considered the equivalent of a Real-time observation. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Multiple Sustained Outages on an individual line, if caused by the same vegetation, will be reported as one outage regardless of the actual number of outages within a 24-hour period. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Items in the Evidence Requested section are suggested evidence that may, but will not necessarily, demonstrate compliance. These items are not mandatory and other forms and types of evidence may be submitted at the entity’s discretion. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
7. When the applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner is prevented from performing a Vegetation Inspection within the timeframe in R6 due to a natural disaster, the TO or GO is granted a time extension that is equivalent to the duration of the time the TO or GO was prevented from performing the Vegetation Inspection. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Circumstances that are beyond the control of an applicable Transmission Owner or applicable Generator Owner include but are not limited to natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires, tornados, hurricanes, landslides, ice storms, floods, or major storms as defined either by the TO or GO or an applicable regulatory body. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)