

**NERC**

NORTH AMERICAN ELECTRIC  
RELIABILITY CORPORATION

# ALIGN

## Registered Entity Newsletter

January 2022

### INSIDE THIS EDITION

[Release 3 Update](#) | [ERO SEL Update](#) | [Release 4 Update](#) | [Canada](#) | [Accessing Align and the ERO SEL Quick Links for Reference](#) | [Want to Learn More? Key Contacts and Resources](#) | [About the Align Newsletter](#)

## LET'S GET ALIGNED: KEY TAKEAWAYS

### **Release 3 Update**

Align Release 3 was deployed to production on December 9, 2021. This deployment included three parts: a platform upgrade, deployment of audit and scheduling functionality, and migration of closed violations from regional legacy systems.

Shortly after deployment, the system experienced database performance issues. The project team took the system offline on Tuesday, December 14, in order to perform root cause analysis. The system was offline until Monday, December 20, 8 am EST.

Outlined below are the project team's initial findings and activities in progress to resolve the issues. A formal report will be published in February 2022.

### ***Preliminary Findings and Interim Solutions***

Performance impacts to Align were uncovered after loading the historical closed violations from regional legacy systems. Simultaneously, the use of periodic data submittals (PDS) and self certifications (SC) functionality increased exponentially due to year-end activities in the regions. It was determined that the current technical design of PDSs and SC are inefficient and consume too much database processing power, in turn impacting performance of the reporting engine. This was not found during the testing phase. These inefficiencies became more impactful because historical data was also loaded into the database. We do not believe deployment of Release 3 functionality was the root cause.

The PDS and SC functionality will be redesigned to be more efficient. As an interim step, the regions are processing PDSs in batches not to exceed 50, and submitting SCs one at a time. The redesign will remove this restriction. The same design principles are used in the Release 3 audit functionality. Those same performance improvements will be made in this area.

These interim solutions do not impact the registered entities' ability to submit a self-report, PDS or SC.

Additionally, an issue was identified in the reporting database. The resolution will include adding a separate database to the reporting engine to off-load performance away from the application.

### ***Long-Term Solutions and Future Mitigations***

To mitigate future Align performance issues, the project team, in partnership with the key vendor, is undertaking the following actions:

- Prioritize the performance and stability of the platform during January and February 2022.
  - Redesign PDSs and SCs; apply those same updates to Release 3 audit functionality; minimal re-training expected
- Re-design and re-factor database queries and reporting capability
- Create an additional reporting instance away from the application to off-load processing
- Our vendor will review Release 3 audit design to ensure optimal performance, and do a deep review of future technical designs
- Engage a third party for additional performance testing

The project team will advise in March regarding an updated schedule for Release 4 and Canadian jurisdiction implementation. Regional adoption plans for Release 3 are under review pending the resolution of performance issues.

#### **Release 4**

The Align project team commenced development of Release 4 on November 1. The team made progress on two development cycles prior to the deployment of Release 3 and the unplanned outage. The schedule for Release 4 will be reset after Release 3 performance issues are resolved.

#### **ERO SEL Update**

The Align project team and support resources are aware of and aggressively addressing intermittent access and permission issues regarding the ERO Enterprise Secure Evidence Locker (ERO SEL). NERC has supplemented its team with additional support resources from the key vendor to resolve these issues. NERC will provide an update to the regional change agents as resolutions are identified and implemented. NERC appreciates the patience of both regional staff and stakeholders as we work through these technical challenges while maintaining data security.

#### **Canadian Jurisdictions' Use of Align**

The Align project team continues to work with those Regions that support Canadian regulators (i.e., MRO, NPCC, and WECC) to create project plans and activities in support of using Align. These activities include determining high-level requirements by province, importing provincial standards data into Align, and defining the appropriate user roles.

Currently, Ontario is live with Align as of Release 1 in May 2021. The implementation plan for Canadian provinces is below, but is subject to change as requirements and data elements are finalized, and also the resolution of Release 3 performance issues:

- Manitoba & Saskatchewan (MRO) – Q2 2022
- Alberta & British Columbia (WECC) – Q3 2022
- Nova Scotia (NPCC) – Q4 2022

## Accessing Align

An important part of the project's success is ensuring appropriate access to the system. An active ERO Portal Account is required to access Align and the ERO SEL. **Please follow the instructions below to verify an existing account or set up a new account and note that it takes 48 hours for a new account to be activated.** For password resets, select the "Forgot Password/Username" to reset a password. For questions or problems concerning ERO Portal accounts, please submit a support ticket [here](#).

All registered entities' primary compliance contacts (PCCs) should also have an ERO Portal Account and be set up as Align Registered Entity Submitters and the Entity Administrators responsible for approving access requests. Users approved by the PCCs are automatically given an ERO SEL submitter role. Additional access to the ERO SEL outside of Align access must be handled with a support ticket.

Refer to the [Registered Entity User Access Guide](#) for detailed instructions.

### To Set Up an ERO Portal Account:

1. Navigate to <https://eroportal.nerc.net>.
2. Select "Register" in the upper left-hand corner.
3. Complete the registration form and click "Submit."

### To Verify an ERO Portal Account:

1. Navigate to <https://eroportal.nerc.net>.
2. Select "Sign In" in the upper left-hand corner.
3. Enter your credentials to confirm access to ERO Portal.

## Quick Links for Reference

Here is a list of links to commonly requested project materials for Align and the ERO SEL. Please reach out to your Change Agents for additional materials.

Quick Links
<a href="#">FAQs</a>
<a href="#">Align Governance Model</a> (Updated April 2021)
<a href="#">Registered Entity SEL Requirements</a> (Updated February 2021)

<a href="#">NERC Training Site</a>
<a href="#">Release 1 CEA User Guide</a>
<a href="#">CEA SEL User Guide</a>
<a href="#">Release 2 CEA User Guide</a>
<a href="#">Registered Entity User Access Guide</a>
<a href="#">Data Handling Guide to Align and ERO SEL</a>
<a href="#">Align Business Case</a>

### Want to Learn More? Key Contacts and Resources

Please submit questions to [AskAlign@NERC.net](mailto:AskAlign@NERC.net) or reach out to your Regional Change Agent. The change agents meet monthly and have the latest project updates. They are another resource for asking questions or sharing comments and feedback on the project.

Align Change Agents	
Organization	Change Agents
MRO	<a href="#">Desiree Sawyer</a> , <a href="#">Marissa Falco</a>
NERC	<a href="#">Chris Boyd-Witherspoon</a> , <a href="#">Jamie Calderon</a> , <a href="#">Farzaneh Tafreshi</a> , <a href="#">Sara Minges</a>
NPCC	<a href="#">Jason Wang</a> , <a href="#">Kimberly Griffith</a>
ReliabilityFirst	<a href="#">Anthony Jablonski</a>
SERC	<a href="#">Andrew Williamson</a> , <a href="#">Janice Carney</a> , <a href="#">Melinda Montgomery</a> , <a href="#">Rick Dodd</a> , <a href="#">Todd Curl</a>
Texas RE	<a href="#">Rochelle Brown</a>
WECC	<a href="#">Angie Shapiro</a> , <a href="#">Ben Aldous</a> , <a href="#">Mailee Cook</a>

Release 2 Training Contacts	
Region	Training Leads
MRO	<a href="#">Desiree Sawyer</a> ; <a href="#">Jeremy Mattke</a> ; <a href="#">Rob Quinlan</a>
NPCC	<a href="#">Daniel Kidney</a> ; <a href="#">Duong Le</a> ; <a href="#">Kimberly Griffith</a>
ReliabilityFirst	<a href="#">Bob Folt</a> ; <a href="#">Bob Yates</a> ; <a href="#">George Spila</a> ; <a href="#">Anthony Jablonski</a> ; <a href="#">Ron Ross</a>
SERC	<a href="#">Alex Shestopal</a> ; <a href="#">Derek Lepresti</a> ; <a href="#">Janice Carney</a> ; <a href="#">Rafael Lerdo</a> ; <a href="#">Rick Dodd</a> ; <a href="#">Shawna Speer</a>

### Release 2 Training Contacts

<b>Texas RE</b>	<a href="#">Ben Gregson</a> ; <a href="#">Dennis Glass</a> ; <a href="#">Devin Kitchens</a> ; <a href="#">Eric Newnam</a> ; <a href="#">Rochelle Brown</a>
<b>WECC</b>	<a href="#">Aldo Nevarez</a> ; <a href="#">Angie Shapiro</a> ; <a href="#">Duane Cooke</a> ; <a href="#">Jessica King</a> ; <a href="#">Tyler Whiting</a>

### ABOUT THE ALIGN NEWSLETTER

This newsletter compiles a list of important Align project updates with actionable deadlines, as well as upcoming events, recently posted resources, and other relevant news and information. Please email [AskAlign@nerc.net](mailto:AskAlign@nerc.net) with feedback on this newsletter. Current and future newsletters and additional project resources, including the regularly updated [Align FAQs](#), can be found on the [Align Project Site](#).