**Are you ready to get the lights back on quickly?***Randy Schrieber, Marketing and Sales - Power Equipment Services - North America*

Cybersecurity gets most of the media attention these days. You can’t turn on the TV without hearing about how a business or government agency got hacked. While your IT department takes measures to keep hackers out, most operations and maintenance people focus on ensuring the physical security of their assets and facilities.

Some of that protection takes the form of physical barriers to keep potential evildoers out. Whether it’s some dimwit trying to steal copper from an energized line or a serious vandal intent on disrupting your operations, strong fences, walls, and doors are still a fundamental way to keep them out.

You also need to protect your network from disruptions due to storms and other natural events. Whether it is potential wind or water damage, look for weak spots and harden or relocate equipment on your system. People are also building in protection through more resilient systems. Smart grid technology helps restore or reroute power more quickly.

You may have a rock-solid plan in place, but you’re not done until you can answer the question “What happens when all those protections fail?” The answer is you better have a contingency plan. Some assets can be quickly replaced with a call to your supplier. For the big assets, the ones not available off the shelf, you need to ask yourself:

* What spares do I have?   
  You know what’s in inventory but are you sure they are ready to use? Maybe someone needed a part to make a repair, and nabbing it from your spare was the quickest solution.
* Where are the spares and how I get them here?   
  Having spares nearby the active assets makes replacement easier, but puts the spares at risk of being damaged by the same storm that takes out your primary assets. If you store transformer spares offsite and have to use public roads to get them to your plant, is the route determined and can you quickly get the necessary permits?
* Are they ready to go?   
  For large transformers, it’s often best to keep them energized with no load. If any assets are stored in areas subject to cold weather, consider control cabinet heaters that turn on when the temperature drops or humidity is high to avoid condensation.
* Are they ready to connect?  
  It’s unlikely you have an exact match for the primary device. Are you sure the spare transformer or breaker will fit on the pad and tie into the bus work? The best time to answer these questions isn’t when your primary asset is on fire or under water.

At an APW session I attended, a speaker from one of the largest utilities in the US admitted something we all know; outages can’t all be prevented – the goal is to get the power restored quickly, and especially avoid a lengthy outage. That’s why preparing for restoration of damaged assets should be part of your physical security planning.

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