



Utility Infrastructure Security Conference Explores Unique Challenges to Addressing Twenty-First Century Security Threats

HARTFORD, CONN. – On October 15, 2018, utility and energy professionals, utility commissioners, consumer advocates, security entrepreneurs, and other officials convened at Upward Hartford for the inaugural Utility Infrastructure Security Conference. Consumer Counsel and NASUC President Elin Swanson Katz, Public Utilities Regulatory Authority Vice-Chair and NARUC President Jack Betkoski III, and Upward Hartford CEO Shana Schlossberg welcomed attendees and observed that utilities, both in Connecticut and across the country, are subject to increased cyber attacks and traditional threats.

Douglas Little, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental and External Affairs at the federal Department of Energy, delivered the Keynote Address, focusing his remarks on the need for cooperating and communication among utility stakeholders as the best method by which to stay abreast of continually evolving security challenges. “We must figure out how to out-innovate our adversaries,” he stressed and noted the Department of Energy’s emphasis on securing the grid against potential bad actors.

The day included discussion panels made up of utility corporate executives and security professionals from around the country, including Connecticut’s two electric utilities, Eversource and United Illuminating. Prominent themes included the need for continual innovation in the face of threats that are always changing and open dialogue with state regulators and consumer advocates when planning to bolster security. United Illuminating CEO Tony Marone observed that ratepayers must ultimately bear the cost of security expenditures and that as a result it is imperative to ensure that all stakeholders understand the need for investing in better physical and cyber security. All panelists agreed that the “new normal” for utilities going forward is to expect constant threats to data systems and physical infrastructure and to plan accordingly.

An exciting element of the conference was the presence of numerous technology and security start-ups and firms from around the world. The firms offered individual displays of new technologies and products that could assist utilities in proactively guarding against malicious cyber threats and potential targeting of utility infrastructure and data. These included fully autonomous drone surveillance, software to simulate cyber attacks than can identify weak points in a system, and hands-on training to utility staff to learn how to identify and combat potential threats. The energy and enthusiasm of the security firms demonstrated the great potential for innovation and collaboration with utilities in order to best secure utility infrastructure and ensure that consumers continue to receive reliable utility service despite the new challenges of the Twenty-First Century.

Overall, the conference provided a stark picture of serious threats posed to utility infrastructure by malicious actors, both at home and abroad. Yet it also demonstrated the boundless ability of collaboration and technological advances to identify and ameliorate those same threats. Although our modern, interconnected society poses distinct challenges to traditional utility operations, it also fosters a culture of cooperation between stakeholders that can meet those challenges undaunted.

Please visit  [OCC's website.](#)