

Security issues drive Central's expansion plan

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 21 July 2011 17:33 -

CNPP&ID board considers proposed \$1.2 million project.

Residents in small communities like Gothenburg often take security for granted.

But when it comes to the Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District's office in Gothenburg, which monitors and controls four hydroplants, a secure control office has become a priority.

Employees in the local office are completing a \$40,000 security project as part of a mandate by the North American Electrical Reliability Corporation.

NERC is the electric reliability organization certified by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to establish and enforce reliability standards for the bulk-power system.

CNPP&ID provides both electrical power and irrigation.

Another project, with expected approval by the CNPP&ID board in August, is for an estimated \$1.2 million expansion of the office and control center.

"Because of the changes required by NERC, it brought to light deficiencies in the building in the way it is," explained electrical superintendent Devin Brundage. "It's not secured to the level of post 9-11 that is required."

Brundage said the current office was built for needs that existed in the 1970s.

"We've added and relocated staff but didn't increase in size," he said.

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To comply with NERC regulations, access to the control room is now secured. Video surveillance has also been installed.

Additional monitoring, access control and surveillance will also be installed at the Kingsley Hydroplant and perhaps Central's other hydroplants which include Jeffrey and Johnson No. 1 and 2, Brundage said.

In addition to the hydroplants, Gothenburg's control center maintains remote supervisory control over Nebraska Public Power District's Keystone Dam and supply canal head gates, control structures on Central's supply canal, the head gates of main irrigation canals and control structures on the E65 and Phelps irrigation systems.

Brundage said securing the Kingsley plant is critical.

If there's a power blackout in Nebraska or the United States, he said the plant can restart itself.

"Electricity could then be sent to other generating stations like Gerald Gentleman," he said.

The coal-fired plant, near Sutherland, is the largest power generating plant in Nebraska.

Local employees did many of the security changes such as removing windows in the control room, Brundage said. He noted that a security firm assisted with access control and video surveillance.

As far as the expansion project, Brundage said 9,000 square feet will be added to the existing building which will include four more offices, a conference/media room and shop.

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A metal building to house outside equipment will also be erected.

Brundage said they are interviewing architects for the expansion project.

If the plan and architect are approved, he said officials hope to break ground in March of 2012 with completion expected in a year.

Both the security and expansion projects are in Central's budget, Brundage said.

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