

Answering the call

COG members and suppliers are leading in COVID-19 response; COG is there for the assist



As the pandemic-related shutdown continues, CANDU Owners Group (COG) members, suppliers and partners continue to pump out safe, clean and affordable electricity to meet the demands of daily life and essential services.

And, they are stepping up to do much more: they are maintaining critical research and contributing unprecedented levels of money, equipment and supplies to pandemic-response efforts. They continue to deliver nuclear materials for development of nuclear medical diagnostics. The industry members are partnering with other companies, research organizations and universities to move into new areas of design and manufacturing to help supply ventilators and face shields.

The industry is helping the world consider the next steps to get back to work after the required physical distancing period comes to a close, as SNC-Lavalin's team is doing in [their restart advice](#) for the construction trade.

Cumulatively, the nuclear community is positively affecting the lives of millions of people through this most challenging of times.

Read about recent efforts of COG Members [here](#).

Read about recent efforts of the COG Supplier Participants [here](#).

Read the Canadian Nuclear Association's press release [here](#).

COG: There for the assist

Through COG, the Canadian and international community of member operators are connected into a fleet-wide COVID-19 response capability to strengthen and share their own expertise, resources, supply chain and solutions to common challenges, as they arise.

Participants in the COG O&M Pandemic Planning Group

In early March, COG formed the Operations and Maintenance Pandemic Planning Group with members from command incident teams at several COG-member stations.

The peer team consists of Canadian member utilities and CNL, as well as NA-SA in Argentina and Romania's SNN. It is facilitated with COG staff with deep plant experience of their own, who can help the group think through the challenges as they facilitate discussions and help track down relevant information. A COG project manager is also on the calls as a conduit between the team and C6 fleet members not in attendance on the call to ensure information exchange is available between all COG members.

This work is being led by COG's Kerry Clemen, Rick Manners and Ron Hamann with administration support from Esther Sun-Lee. As well, COG's Nidhi Gaudani participates on behalf of the C6 fleet and serves as a conduit to share information with those who cannot attend the calls for logistical reasons.

Other COG and member team participants include:

Bruce Power: Mark Slade

CNL: George Dolinar

COG: Fred Dermar, John Sowagi

NA-SA: Hector Hidalgo, Sergio Russomanno

NB Power: Michael Hare

OPG: David Dickey

SNN: Valentin Nae Ovidiu

An Operations and Maintenance Pandemic Planning Group consisting of station leadership from utilities in Canada and internationally and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) was established to allow real-time information exchange to assist with response to emergent technical issues arising from the pandemic.

The collaboration includes development of protocols and workforce management. It is ensuring critical programs and supply chain are maintained despite the complications created by COVID-19. Immediate operating experience is shared twice weekly via teleconferencing and through a team site on the secure COGonline platform. The group is also connected into the World Association of Nuclear Operators Atlanta Centre (WANO-AC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI).

From human performance to technology solutions

To date, more than 30 different issues have been examined by the O&M group members, ranging from use of masks as a barrier to COVID-19 to enhanced cleaning techniques. As well, a myriad of workforce management policies, such as protocols for on-site visitors and considerations for managing shift crews have been considered.

Early on, the group looked at best practices for temperature monitoring as employees came on site. The team has also reviewed how to apply human performance tools in a time of physical distancing and protocols for staff in the station and working from home. New technologies and innovative processes that can be applied to improve plant performance and reduce any pandemic-related risks have been investigated.

As the world looks to move out of physical distancing protocols, a special team is being set up amongst the operators to review and recommend best practices that can be adopted at all stations.

Beyond operations: Regulatory and communication co-operation

In addition to the O&M Peer Team initiative, COG has been a collaboration vehicle for other workgroups tackling COVID-related issues at the utilities.

The existing Regulatory Affairs Vice Presidents' Forum has been holding virtual meetings to examine potential implications and strategies for meeting regulatory requirements during the pandemic and to provide a coordinated response to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

Nuclear communicators from 10 organizations — including operators and several other industry organizations — shared best practices and examples of communications during the initial days of the COVID-19 response as all utilities were reacting in real-time to set and re-set protocols as the situation rapidly evolved. This initiative resulted in a communicator resource library during the most intensive operational communication period. The infrastructure will be available again when new protocols and communications are required as the COVID-related restrictions ease and employees head back into their workplaces.

COG is also linked into an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) initiative to share experience amongst operators across all nuclear technologies, worldwide. This initiative, with 50 participants from 21 member states is helping countries, including those with smaller nuclear programs to benefit from knowledge that exists across the broader international community.

Excellence through collaboration, even in the time of COVID

In the first week of March, COG made the difficult decision to cancel its General Business Meeting, planned for March 11, after having already implemented several COVID-related protocols in its workplace in the weeks prior. At the time, COG was ahead of many in making this decision as the world, struggled to understand the speed and severity of what was happening.

One reason COG had its antennae up early on COVID-19 response is the organization's international nature, with members in seven countries, worldwide. With planned site visits and activities involving the international members, COG needed to track the situation long before it had touched down in Canada, where the COG office is located.

COG's member in China, CNNO, first encountered COVID and put mitigations in place at the Qinshan nuclear plant in January. Since then, CNNO has instituted many measures as it continues its response to the evolving situation there, including integration of the workforce back into the station. CNNO has shared their OPEX through COG to the benefit of the rest of the fleet, as have COG's other international members.

CNNO has a delegate who works at the company's Toronto office, as many COG members do. JunMing Sang, and the other delegates, have served a valuable role in information exchange between COG and its international members, which in turn has contributed to COG's ability to inform industry response.

More collaboration, not less

One might think an organization know for hosting and participating broadly in conferences may be hampered by a restrictive physical distancing scenario. Not so.

Since COG halted meetings and instituted work-at-home policies, the COG team has used the company's well-established meeting systems and well-formed network to bring information to our members and to help them connect with each other. COG's most recent At a Glance calendar of events demonstrates that the show -- and strong collaboration -- does go on through the virtual space. The roster of peer team meetings and workshops continues as does important research, joint projects, OPEX sharing and other forms of teamwork. In fact, with travel removed from the equation and everyone becoming better versed in the technologies, some COG-member teams are finding it easier to connect more often for shorter touch-point meetings. On one single morning, COG hosted 20 WebEx meetings, involving more than 200 participants.

A virtual laboratory to learn from experience

There is no question that some of the practices that have been put in place in response to COVID-19 will become the new norm as we emerge from the pandemic. Given COG's role enabling collaboration, COG is examining and experimenting to strengthen learning on how to run on-line meetings most efficiently, including:

- Which technologies work best for which types of meetings;
- The optimum duration of meetings, including when to take breaks and for how long; and
- Developing new roles for conducting meetings. For example, separating the role of host from the roles of facilitator and chair.

We are striving to achieve our mission of Excellence through Collaboration by achieving excellence in collaboration.

Our commitment to this is not bound by the physical world. Whether virtually or in person, COG is committed to providing its members the best opportunity to gain exponential outcomes in knowledge and performance through cost-sharing and connection to peer expertise and collaborative solutions.

You can connect to peers through COG whether you are joining from across the globe or perhaps these days, a desk in your spare bedroom.

In many cases, peer teams, workshops and other activities continue through our COG teleconference and video systems.

We are committed to providing service and value to our members and the industry during this period and as we look to the future.

In the coming weeks, we will continue to look for opportunities where COG can provide valuable services and provide further opportunities to help our members as they respond to the needs of people they serve.