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**WEQ Approves First Standard; Funds Transfer Agent Agreement
Designed to Help Women- and Minority-Owned Businesses Trade Power**

HOUSTON—A contract addendum designed to ease the entry of women- and minority-owned companies into the wholesale electricity business has been approved by the wholesale electric quadrant (WEQ) Executive Committee of the North American Energy Standards Board (NAESB).

The funds transfer agent agreement (FTAA) is the first standard to be approved by the WEQ Executive Committee. The standard must still be ratified by WEQ members.

NAESB's wholesale gas quadrant (WGQ), formerly the Gas Industry Standards Board (GISB), has had an FTAA in effect since 1998. The addendum allows small companies to obtain credit and financing in order to carry out commodity transactions.

With an FTAA, a bank acts as a financial intermediary for marketers and handles payment transfers to suppliers through specially selected or

“blocked” accounts. Marketers thus do not have to obtain letters of credit as collateral.

Steve Corneli, Executive Committee vice chairman for the WEQ, said, “The FTAA has proved to be very successful in helping women- and minority-owned businesses take part in the wholesale natural gas market, and it should be just as effective on the electric side.

“It is significant that the WEQ’s first standard concerns an instrument that has the potential to increase both the number and the diversity of market participants,” said Corneli, director of regulatory affairs for NRG Power Marketing Inc.

“The approval of the FTAA will provide the opportunity for all market participants to transact with a broader spectrum of players,” said Amy Gasca, chair of the WEQ’s FTAA Task Force.

“This impacts generators, end users, consumers, and women- and minority-owned businesses alike,” added Gasca, president and CEO of AmPro Energy, a Houston-based independent retail energy provider.

NAESB, formed in January 2002, is an independent and voluntary North American organization that develops and promotes the use of business practices and electronic communications standards for the wholesale and retail natural gas and electricity industries.

NAESB is the successor to GISB, which was established in 1994. NAESB’s members include over 400 companies and organizations that participate actively in the retail and wholesale natural gas and electricity markets.

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