

BUSINESSSAFE

BusinessSafe is designed to aid businesses in protecting the safety and well-being of Florida's residents and visitors from threats. BusinessSafe provides private sector partners with open source information, analysis and resources to help protect their businesses and communities.

Florida Fusion Center 21-101

August 2021, Issue #57

BusinessSafe Sector Highlight Water and Wastewater Systems Sector

August is National Water Quality Month. In the U.S., the Water and Wastewater System sector consists of facilities that process and treat water and wastewater, including their distribution systems. This sector has approximately 153,000 public drinking water systems and 16,000 public wastewater treatment systems across the country along with privately owned facilities and wells. Water and Wastewater Systems are considered a lifeline sector since it is vital to all other critical infrastructure sectors and heavily relied on by the public for access to drinking water. Due to the importance of this sector, federal, state and local agencies work with facility operators to ensure this sector is secure and resilient against criminal activity, other threats and natural hazards.

Criminal Activity

Water and wastewater facilities can be compromised by criminal actors in a variety of ways. Attacks or disruptions could lead to spills, operations disruptions, water contamination, and loss of water. Facilities use multiple mitigation measures, tests and redundancies to ensure facility, equipment, and water remain secure.

1. **Security Breach** – Water and Wastewater systems have outdoor equipment and resources such as pipes, ponds and distribution systems. While many facilities have multiple forms of security to protect these areas, criminal actors may attempt to breach security to engage in theft, vandalism or other illegal activity. Preventing unauthorized access to the facility and water supplies are priorities for any facility operator.
[Suspect Confesses to Vandalizing, Setting Fire to Several Water Department Sites in Athens Area](#)
[Man Vandalized a Pierce County Wastewater Treatment Plant with A Front Loader](#)
2. **Cyber Attacks** – Many facilities have implemented cyber security measures to limit network vulnerabilities. Still, criminal actors continue to seek to exploit the use of technology and network systems by these facilities. Criminal actors may use multiple tactics such as intrusions, phishing, denial of service or ransomware. Water and Wastewater System facilities mitigate against these threats by using redundancy check techniques to ensure contaminated water does not reach the public.
[A Hacker Tried to Poison a Florida City's Water Supply](#)
[Kansas Man Indicted for Tampering with a Public Water System](#)



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Other Threats and Hazards

Terrorism, targeted attacks, and natural disasters can impact the Water and Wastewater Systems sector by destruction to equipment and facilities, water contamination, or leaking of treated water into the environment. In the U.S. water and wastewater facilities ensure they have safety and security measures in place against attacks and are able to withstand or mitigate threats from natural disasters.

1. **Terrorism and Targeted Attacks** –To date, there have not been any physical terrorist attacks to the water and wastewater system in the United States. However, the Water and Wastewater sector has been targeted by terrorists overseas. These groups have used a variety of tactics to target water and wastewater facilities such as explosions, weapon attacks, and potential attempts to contaminate the water supply. In the U.S., this sector continues to increase its resilience to detect and mitigate any potential attacks.

[Second Attack on Libyan Water Plant
Iraq Oil, Water Lines Struck](#)

2. **Natural Disasters** –Physical damage to a water facility from a natural disaster can disrupt operations and have adverse effects on the water supply. Additionally, drought conditions can affect the availability of water to these facilities which can impact a facilities ability to provide water to the public. Advances in technology and mitigation efforts have helped the sector become more resilient against natural disasters.

[Wastewater Treatment Plant Back Online Following Overnight Storm
Water Emergency Declared in Polson](#)

Resources

The EPA offers information, training and resources regarding [drinking water and wastewater resilience](#).

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection [Division of Water Resource Management](#) offers information and resources on Florida's water and wastewater systems.

“If You See Something, Say Something®” – Report suspicious activity to your local law enforcement agency, on the FDLE website using [Florida's See Something, Say Something Tool Kit](#), via the Florida See Say app, or by calling 855-FLA-Safe. In an emergency, call 911.



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