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Strained Rural Water Utilities Buckle Under Pandemic Pressure.

Rural water and wastewater systems have largely been left out of federal and state pandemic relief.

The months leading up to the coronavirus pandemic already spelled trouble for the Rome Water System and the tiny community it serves in the Mississippi Delta.

A tornado tossed around several homes, closed roads and left the community without power for two weeks. Lightning strikes on two separate occasions damaged pumps used to transport water and wastewater for about 75 connections serving about 220 people.

The system usually takes in about \$3,400 a month. But since the pandemic hit, the system has been bringing in just over half as much. It can't catch up until people start paying their bills, said the system's treasurer, Irie Knighten.

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Route Fifty

By April Simpson

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