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## **What Will It Take to Defend Public Water from Cyber Attacks?**

**Water may be among the least cyber-defended critical infrastructure sectors. Keeping it safe may include channeling more funds and training to tiny agencies and establishing voluntary guidelines.**

Public water systems are exceptionally vulnerable to cyber attack, said senators during a U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works hearing July 21.

The White House has deemed sixteen industry sectors as essential to the nation's health, safety economy and/or security. Among them, the financial services sector has emerged with particularly robust defenses, while drinking water and wastewater systems may be among the most loosely protected.

Water systems on both coasts were hit by digital tampering efforts this year, in incidents that did not ultimately harm residents but which nonetheless raised alarm bells about the utilities' cyber preparedness. Criminals broke into a Bay Area California water facility's systems to delete programs involved in treating drinking water, a former employee allegedly used remote access to shut down a Kansas water system's cleaning and disinfection processes and hackers seemingly tried to poison Oldsmar, Fla., residents by elevating the amount of the lye used during water treatment — before staff detected and reversed that attempt.

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