

Water Sector Coordinating Council



State of the Sector 2021: Cybersecurity

June 17, 2021

Today the Water Sector Coordinating Council is releasing results from an April 2021 survey conducted to better understand the cybersecurity challenges and needs of U.S. water and wastewater utilities.

With threats from increasingly sophisticated and destructive attackers, cybersecurity has become a top priority for water and wastewater systems. Recent incidents have added urgency to discussions within the sector and with Congress and in federal agencies on how best to help utilities improve their cybersecurity.

This voluntary, anonymous survey was distributed to utilities across the country by the nation's water and wastewater associations. 606 respondents from water and wastewater utilities of all sizes completed the survey. The results represent a first-of-its-kind snapshot of the Water and Wastewater Systems Sector's cybersecurity status.

Data show that many utilities are taking the necessary steps to protect their information technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) systems, for example by incorporating cybersecurity into risk management plans and protecting IT and OT assets.

For many utilities, more action is needed to protect against cyber threats. The survey results will inform discussions with policymakers and will be used to enhance the sector's own cybersecurity programs.

Survey respondents identified a number of areas where the federal government can support the sector. The top four categories are:

- Training and education specific to the water sector,
- Technical assistance, assessments, and tools,
- Cybersecurity threat information, and
- Federal loans and grants.

Both the sector and its federal partners have already developed resources for most of these areas, with the exception of federal loans and grants. Additional resources are clearly needed to reach a wider audience within our large and diverse sector. The development and promotion of these resources must recognize the range of resources and capabilities within the sector and will require a combined effort between the sector, government agencies, and other partners.

The Water Sector Coordinating Council is a policy, strategy and coordination mechanism for the Water and Wastewater Sector in interactions with the government and other sectors on critical infrastructure security and resilience issues.