



WATER ISAC | TOP ACTIONS to Enhance Your Utility's Physical Security

1 Conduct a Risk and Vulnerability Assessment

- ✔ Helps utilities identify and prioritize threats to critical assets, systems, and operations. This includes evaluating physical facilities, infrastructure, and operational dependencies.
- ✔ The assessment should document likelihood, potential consequences, and existing safeguards, allowing leadership to focus resources on the highest-risk areas.
- ✔ America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) of 2018 requires community water systems serving more than 3,300 people to conduct Risk and Resilience Assessments.
- ✔ **Resource(s):** [Vulnerability Self-Assessment Tool: Conduct a Drinking Water or Wastewater Utility Risk Assessment](#) and [WaterISAC's Threat Analysis for the Water and Wastewater Sector](#)

2 Document Emergency Response Plans, Policies, and Procedures

- ✔ Written emergency response plans provide clear guidance for preventing, responding to, and recovering from physical security incidents and other emergencies.
- ✔ These plans should define roles and responsibilities, communication protocols, incident escalation thresholds, and coordination with external partners.
- ✔ Procedures should be practical, current, and accessible to staff, with regular reviews to ensure alignment with operational changes, staffing updates, and regulatory requirements.
- ✔ AWIA also requires community water systems serving more than 3,300 people to develop emergency response plans.
- ✔ **Resource(s):** [Develop or Update an Emergency Response Plan](#)

3 Exercise Emergency Response Plans and Other Security Contingencies

- ✔ Exercises validate that emergency response plans work in real-world scenarios. Utilities should conduct tabletop exercises, drills, and functional exercises, on at least an annual basis, to test response to scenarios such as an active shooter, a ransomware attack, or a contamination incident.
- ✔ Exercises help identify gaps in communication, staffing, equipment, and decision-making, and provide an opportunity to improve coordination and operational capabilities within your organization.
- ✔ Participate in [H2OEx](#) - WaterISAC's in-person Tabletop Exercise series is a great opportunity to exercise response plans, improve response readiness, and build resilience.
- ✔ **Resource(s):** [H2OEx](#) and [CISA Tabletop Exercise Packages](#)

4 Conduct Awareness Training of the Threats and Risk Facing the Sector

- ✔ Security awareness training ensures employees and contractors understand the physical security threats facing the water and wastewater sector and their role in prevention.
- ✔ Training should cover recognizing suspicious behavior, proper badge and access control procedures, insider threat indicators, and how to report security concerns. Since utility staff are often the first to observe abnormalities, building a culture of awareness significantly reduces the likelihood that threats go unreported.

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- ✔ WaterISAC's online physical security threat briefings cover a wide range of topics utilities can share with their staff for awareness training.

✔ **Resource(s):** [WaterISAC Webcasts](#) and [CISA Training Courses](#)

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Network with Neighboring Utilities and Local Law Enforcement

- ✔ Building relationships with neighboring utilities allows for information sharing, mutual aid, and coordinated response during emergencies, which strengthens a utility's overall operational resilience.
 - ✔ Engagement with local law enforcement ensures they are familiar with a utility's facilities, access points, and critical assets, enabling faster and more effective response. Regular meetings, joint exercises, and participation in regional security or emergency management groups can improve situational awareness and resilience across the sector.
- ✔ **Resource(s):** [National Network of Fusion Centers Fact Sheet](#)

About WaterISAC

WaterISAC is the only all-hazards security information source for the water and wastewater sector. We serve over 3,800 water sector personnel across several hundred utilities and other organizations. Our utility members provide water and wastewater service to most of the United States, and we also serve utilities in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. [Find out more about WaterISAC's products and services here.](#)

