

**Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks**

**Ministère de l'Environnement,
de la Protection de la nature
et des Parcs**

Environmental Permissions
Branch

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April 13, 2022

To All Municipal Drinking Water System Owners/Operators,

There is a growing threat of cyber-attacks targeting municipal infrastructure, including drinking water systems. Recent incidents in the U.S. and Canada have shown that systems can be vulnerable and that measures must be taken to ensure that they are adequately protected.

These attacks can cause significant harm, including:

- loss of system process visibility for operators (e.g., unable to monitor treatment processes)
- interruption of data recording leading to a loss of critical/compliance data
- inability to remotely control processes and/or loss of automatic control
- installation of malicious programs like ransomware, which can disable business enterprise until money is paid, and
- loss of data (stolen or maliciously deleted).

These attacks can:

- compromise the ability of municipal utilities to provide clean and safe water
- erode customer confidence
- result in financial expenditure and legal liabilities, and
- result in compliance issues from loss of data.

The Drinking Water Quality Management Standard (DWQMS) requires the operating authority for your system to conduct a risk assessment every 36 months. The Ministry has updated the list of hazards and hazardous events that are required to be considered as part of this DWQMS

risk assessment. Notice of this update can be accessed on the Environmental Registry under ERO number 019-4855 or directly at the following link: <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-4855>

I encourage you to review your DWQMS risk assessment to ensure that cybersecurity threats have been considered and take pro-active measures to ensure that your systems, data and records are adequately protected.

If you have any questions about the DWQMS or the need to consider cybersecurity threats in the DWQMS risk assessment, please contact Christopher Manning at Christopher.Manning@Ontario.ca.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Ahmed". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Aziz Ahmed, P. Eng.
Director, Part V, Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002