

Rural Water Policy Advisory [7/10/2017]

Privatizing Your Drinking Water Utility: *"A decision confronting many small and midsize cities with shrinking populations and chronic budget deficits: whether to sell the public water system to a for-profit corporation. The prospect of offloading these headaches to for-profit water companies — and fattening city budgets in the process — is enticing to elected officials who worry that rate hikes could cost them their jobs... But privatization will not magically relieve Americans of the financial burden of upgrading their water infrastructure. Water customers still foot the bill. And although there is no reliable data to compare the service or safety records of public and private utilities, studies show that in most cases, the tab rises when for-profit companies are involved... Even as more cities consider selling their water infrastructure, others are trying to wrest control of their systems back from private operators, usually because of complaints about poor service or rate hikes. Since private owners are rarely willing to surrender these lucrative investments, cities usually end up pursuing eminent domain in court. That means proving that city ownership is in the public's interest and then paying a price determined by the court ([Washington Post](#))."*

Foreign Hackers Breach over a Dozen U.S. Power Plants: The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sent out a general warning about the cyberattack to utilities and related parties on June 28 with few details on the number of plants affected. U.S. officials claim the intruders could be positioning themselves to eventually disrupt the nation's power supply. The alert issued to utilities cited activities by hackers since May. Hackers recently infiltrated an unidentified company that makes control systems for equipment used in the power industry, an attack that officials believe may be related ([NYTimes](#)).

Louisiana Chlorine Leak Impacts Four and Shelter in Place Warning Issued: A St. Gabriel (LA) industrial plant chlorine leak required four people to receive treatment and caused a shelter in place warning to be issued for a two-mile radius ([more](#)).

With More than Half of South Dakota in Drought, Many Rely on Aurora-Brule Rural Water ([TV News](#)).

How Much Lead is Acceptable at the Tap: EPA is attempting to determine a "[health-based benchmark](#)" which aims to predict the relationship between levels of lead in drinking water and blood lead levels (BLLs). EPA conducted an expert peer review of the alternative approaches in their proposal on June 27-28 ([EPA](#)). The agency's 2015 National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) recommendations urged EPA to establish a household action level based on the amount it would take for an infant to have a BLL greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter (ug/dL) based on a healthy infant's consumption of infant formula made with water.

EPA Seeks Science Advisers for Water Issues: The EPA is accepting nominations for its main science advisory board and six science committees, including one for drinking water ([EPA](#)).

EPA's New Guidance for Renewing Stormwater Permits: EPA recently released a three-part series of documents that assists municipalities with the various requirements of their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination system permits for stormwater. The series spells out the six minimum controls that cities, towns and counties should use to reduce stormwater flows, including measures to curb runoff from construction sites ([EPA](#)).

Water Documentary - Toxic Taps: Why Small California Communities Face Unsafe Water: There are about 300 communities in California whose drinking water violates health standards. Residents of rural, low-income communities in California's Central Valley face some of the worst water quality problems as small and underfunded water systems struggle with contaminated groundwater ([YouTube](#)).

Philadelphia - the First City to Set Water Rates Based on Income: More than 40 percent of the city's water utility customers are delinquent in paying their water bills, amounting to about \$242 million in uncollected revenue. The city will charge lower water rates for households with incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty line (which is roughly \$3,075 a month for a family of four). Participating households will pay between 2 percent and 4 percent of their monthly income which could mean bills as low as \$12 a month ([more](#)).

National Rural Water Association

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The National Rural Water Association is the country's largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members.

Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities

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