

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 17, 2021

Mr. Matt Gorham, Assistant Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Cyber Division  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Ms. Radhika Fox, Acting Assistant  
Administrator, Office of Water  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Gorham and Ms. Fox,

I am writing to request information about reports of a serious security compromise of a water treatment plant in Oldsmar, Florida on February 5, 2021. The security and integrity of our critical infrastructure is of utmost importance. The Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) states that 80% of the United States receives potable water from approximately 153,000 public drinking water systems, and any type of attack, including a cyber attack, could result in “illnesses or casualties and/or a denial of service that would also impact public health and economic vitality.”<sup>i</sup> Additionally, other critical infrastructure sectors such as healthcare, emergency services, energy, food and agriculture, and transportation systems depend on the cyber resilience of water facilities.<sup>ii</sup>

According to information released by the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office, the Oldsmar water treatment facility was accessed remotely by an unauthorized entity, who increased the amount of sodium hydroxide in the potable water supply to a dangerous level.<sup>iii</sup> Given the consequences of a successful compromise of this kind, and the broader security weaknesses this unsuccessful attempt may illustrate within critical infrastructure sectors reliant on similar industrial control systems, I would request first, to be informed of the progress of the FBI’s investigation of the incident; second, a review by the Environmental Protection Agency into whether the Oldsmar water treatment facility was compliant with the most recent Water and Wastewater Sector-Specific Plan, and whether that plan, most recently updated in 2015, needs to be updated to confront similar risks; and third, to confirm the Federal Government is sharing timely threat information related to this incident with water and wastewater facilities, and other critical infrastructure providers across the United States.

This incident has implications beyond the 15,000-person town of Oldsmar. While the Oldsmar water treatment facility incident was detected with sufficient time to mitigate serious risks to the citizens of Oldsmar, and appears to have been identified as the result of a diligent employee monitoring this facility’s operations, future compromises of this nature may not be detected in time. The Federal Government must ensure we are taking all precautions to keep drinking water safe for Americans. Designated as one of the 16 infrastructure sectors critical to national security under the Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21), we must protect water facilities from cyber and other compromises.

Please coordinate with my office to provide updates on the investigation of the incident, as well as efforts underway to avoid future compromises on water facilities in the United States.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

---

<sup>i</sup> Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, “Water and Wastewater Systems Sector,” accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.cisa.gov/water-and-wastewater-systems-sector>

<sup>ii</sup> CISA, “Water and Wastewater Systems Sector.”

<sup>iii</sup> Pinellas Sheriff, “Treatment Plant Intrusion Press Conference,” filmed February 8, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkXDSOgLQ6M&ab\\_channel=PinellasSheriff](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkXDSOgLQ6M&ab_channel=PinellasSheriff)