# Are We a Target for Terrorism?

## One Small Community's Efforts at Prevention

**T**hough we are located away from the metropolitan areas and financial centers considered major terrorist targets, we are still being warned that we have a well-defined target in our midst.

What is it? Our source of water: Community Water System (Higden, Ark.). In fact, Comunity Water System (CWS) has known for some time that water supply facilities offer a particularly vulnerable point of attack to terrorists due to the strategic role we played in area business, health and morale. This is not new. The first warning of potential threats to water suppliers was issued by J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI director, shortly after the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor in 1941. With the recent attacks on New York City and Washington D.C., these warnings are receiving considerably more attention.

While the threats we face today are as different as the groups that carry them out, they still are extremely dangerous and could create major problems for our area if no attempt is made to prevent them. Keep in mind that to function properly, the water supply must be constantly available on demand. It must be delivered at a sufficient pressure and it must always be safe to use. Actions that affect any of these three factors can be debilitating for everyone served by Community Water System.

A variety of methods could be used to damage or stop the functions of our water supply.

**Physical damage:** The act of disrupting the water flow by destroying equipment, pumping stations, etc. These actions would create the loss of water flow and pressure and stop all water service to customers.

**Bioterrorism/chemical contamination:** The introduction of a microbiological agent or toxic chemical into the system. Though airborne agents are considered the biggest threat, it is still possible to introduce them via water.

**Cyber attack:** Hacking into a water company's computer system to steal sensitive information, corrupt service activities or completely stop the water flow.

## CWS Security

The security measures for Community Water System are based on the established credo "detect, delay and respond." Basically, most saboteurs will be deterred if they think their actions will be detected. Others will be deterred if they are delayed for a significant amount of time before reaching their end goal because they fear detection. If an intruder does obtain his goal of sabotage, be it contamination of the water or physical destruction of system facilities, then the utility staff must be prepared to respond quickly and appropriately to keep the consequences of the saboteur's action to a minimum.

CWS security is geared to two different circumstances. First, if an imminent threat appears likely, all service personnel are immediately sent to preassigned locations within the system to act as sentrys. These locations include intake sites, pumping stations, holding tanks, etc. Each serviceman, working around the clock, maintains periodic contact with the home office at predetermined intervals. This watch will be maintained until an all clear is sounded.

Ongoing security, or the second phase of this program, is currently underway and scheduled for quick completion. Some of these measures are



*The Community Water System computer network provides a variety of important functions including the monitoring of all pumping station entrances and tank locks. If any unauthorized entry is attempted, the system immediately detects the activity and sets off an alarm.*

- In addition to the computer "entry alert" system already in place, additional monitoring and/or detection systems will be added to increase security at a variety of strategic locations.
- Inspection of all water storage tanks will be conducted to make sure locks and alarm switches are operating properly.
- Inspections of master meter stations, pump stations and vaults will be increased to make sure locks and entry detection devices are in place and functioning properly.
- Additional security is being added for the CWS fuel depot.

- Initiate a sign-in/sign-out sheet for all non-CWS personnel working at any CWS location.
- Make all employees wear high-visibility, photo identification badges at all times.
- Make sure any unfamiliar persons in the plant or office areas are challenged for identification.

## Caution, not Fear

Though threats do exist and security measures are being taken, it is not our intention to alarm anyone or make radical changes in our normal day-to-day service activities. The basic steps we've outlined, along with a number of measures we prefer to keep confidential, should help us keep your water system secure. But most important, we want our customers to know that Community Water System is keenly aware of the threat and actively involved in the steps necessary to prevent their happening.

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- New security fencing added in strategic areas along with the inspection and repair of existing fences and gates. Ground beneath fences will be reworked to eliminate crawl spaces. Random inspections of all fences and gates now will become standard operating procedure.

- All entries will be gated and locked.
- All CWS vehicles will have working radios and hand-held radios for communication purposes.
- A well-conceived security plan outlining all system locations to be watched, along with the personnel assigned to each location, is maintained.

For more information on this subject, circle 869 on the reader service card.