WSVA

Water System Vulnerability Assessments

The main components evaluated under the WSVA are water sources, the distribution system, and the treatment system itself.

A Water System Vulnerability Assessment (WSVA) is an evaluation of a water system's susceptibility to threats or intentional attacks. The WSVA identifies measures to protect the water system and reduce risks, including possible security enhancements, infrastructure upgrades, and/or changes to operational procedures and policies. The three main components that are evaluated under the WSVA include all water sources (e.g., ground water, surface water), the distribution system (e.g., pipes, conveyances, storage tanks), and the treatment system itself.

The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-188) requires all community water systems (CWSs) that serve more than 3,300 people to perform a WSVA. The majority of Army CWSs affected by this leglislation are required to complete WSVAs by June 30, 2004. Based on the results of each assessment, these water systems must also prepare or revise existing emergency response plans (ERPs). The law requires water systems to complete ERPs within six months after the WSVA is completed. Water systems must also certify completion of WSVAs and ERPs.

In addition to the legislation, the Department of Defense (DoD) has mandated that all DoD water systems serving more than 25 people perform a WSVA and prepare or update ERPs, regardless of system type. The Department of the Army Headquarters has recently issued a policy memorandum to support and fully implement DoD's WSVA policy, thereby protecting hundreds of water systems within the continental United States and overseas. Compliance deadlines for these additional WSVAs are dependent on system type and range from December 2004 through December 2008.

For more information

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Because of the sensitive information contained in WSVAs and potentially in ERPs, security of WSVA-related information is a top priority. Within the Army, Force Protection staff play an important role in the WSVA process and generally designate WSVAs as SECRET documents. ERPs typically contain unclassified information to ensure that response teams can readily access the document in the event of an emergency.

The scope of a WSVA can vary widely, based on the complexity of the water system. At minimum, each WSVA must assess pipes and conveyances; physical barriers; water collection, pretreatment, treatment, storage and distribution facilities; electronic, computer or other automated systems; the handling of chemicals; and the operation and maintenance of such systems. The ERP, at minimum, must include plans, procedures, and equipment that can be implemented or used in the event of an intentional attack. It should also identify actions, procedures and equipment that could significantly lessen the impact of an attack.