On the Water Front

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EPWater invests to thwart cybercriminals

As warnings of cyberattacks grow, El Paso Water is diligently fortifying our cybersecurity risk management to ensure the utility's preparedness.

Cybercrime is the No. 1 threat targeting business and critical infrastructure in the U.S., according to national security experts including the FBI and Department of Homeland Security. We have been working behind the scenes to analyze our vulnerabilities and develop a reliable cybersecurity risk management program to protect EPWater and our customers.

EPWater employees monitor data at the utility's central control room.

New security focus

With the recent addition of a cybersecurity analyst, EPWater has taken critical steps to further secure operations and customer data.

Information Security Analyst Anthony Buonvino, Chief Information Officer Fred Solano and our Information Technology department urge utility employees – who are on the front lines of cybersecurity defense – to be aware of cyber risks.

Our cybersecurity efforts mirror the triad of confidentiality, integrity and availability (CIA) – the core of our security model – designed to guide information security policies within an organization.

Our customers can count on EPWater to improve data confidentiality and guard against unintentional, unlawful or unauthorized access.

Protecting our water systems

Our recent investment in a monitoring system adds a security layer to better safeguard our utility water systems in the event of a cyberattack or other disaster. EPWater relies on a real-time Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system to control water distribution operations remotely.

This new monitoring device uses the utility's existing equipment but collects and transmits data on a different network from our SCADA system. The technology acts as a SCADA oversight system, helping EPWater's central control operators monitor levels in our water tanks so utility operations can continue without service interruption.

The SCADA Verification Unit (SVU) has already proven its worth as a cybersecurity solution during power outages. Even if our SCADA system is down, the new and reliable backup monitoring system is still tracking tank water levels as we work to restore and return to normal operations as quickly as possible.

As we observe National Cybersecurity Awareness Month in October, our customers and stakeholders can rest assured that we are performing our due diligence to protect our critical infrastructure.

Cyberthreats are growing and evolving. Addressing our cybersecurity challenges puts EPWater in a better position to deliver the reliable, high quality water services that customers expect.

On the Water Front is a publication of El Paso Water.
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