

COVID Water Sector Impact: American Water Works Association Releases Survey



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The American Water Works Association (“AWWA”) released a document titled:

COVID Water Sector Impact Survey 5 (Oct 2021) (“Survey”)

The *Survey* is stated to have been conducted from October 5-20, 2021, and is a fifth in a series whose purpose is to assess the real time impact of the COVID pandemic on AWWA member organizations.

AWWA describes itself as an international, nonprofit, scientific and educational society dedicated to providing total water solutions assuring the effective management of water. Membership is stated to include over 4,300 utilities that supply roughly 80 percent of the United States drinking water and treat almost half of the nation’s wastewater.

The *Survey* generated 455 responses. The responses included 416 unique utilities along with 28 from consultants, manufacturers, service providers and other non-utility members.

The following are characterized as “key takeaways” of the *Survey*:

- Major challenges currently facing water utilities and other sector organizations are around hiring and supply chains, mirroring challenges throughout the larger economy
- Forty percent (40%) of utilities say they are having issues hiring. Positions hardest to fill include operators, service technicians and drivers
- Seventy-two percent (72%) of utilities face supply chain issues with pipes/infrastructure components and over 45% report issues with vehicles, electronics and chemicals
- Larger utilities, especially those serving populations over 100,000, tend to report facing more challenges than smaller utilities
- Many policies water utilities put in place as a result of the pandemic have been allowed to expire •
- Most utilities do not have vaccination requirements, but nearly 60% of surveyed water sector organizations say at least half their employees are vaccinated
- Half of those with requirements don’t expect these to impact workforce levels. Most that do expect impacts anticipate they will be minor
- Several utilities set up customer assistance programs during the pandemic if they didn’t already have them in place
- Enrollment in CAPs are still at, or just off, peak levels for almost 3 in 5 utilities with these programs
- Seventy-one percent (71%) of utilities at some point in the pandemic instituted some sort of remote work policy, but most have returned to the office

- Views on remote work effectiveness differ, with 55% of utilities reporting no change, 32% saw a decrease in effectiveness, and 13% saw an increase
- The number of utilities and service providers experiencing revenue loss or other financial impacts has dropped, but still a third of utilities and approximately a quarter of service providers report continuing impacts

A copy of the Survey can be downloaded [here](#).