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A PREPARATION GUIDE FOR WATER OPERATORS, ENGINEERING AND SECURITY TEAMS

Prepare Your Water System for an Assessment Before Anyone Arrives

An assessment goes well when the operator has already decided what is in scope, who can authorize work and which records exist. This guide walks a water or wastewater team through those decisions and the records to gather before the first site visit.

Define the System and the Decision Before the Records

Start by recording which system the scope concerns: drinking water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, industrial water systems or a defined combination of them. Name the facility owner, the operator, the remote sites and the people responsible for engineering, IT and cybersecurity, because the assessment team will ask for each of them on the first call, and record the PWSID or permit number beside each system so that every later duty can be counted from it. A utility with twelve remote pump stations that lists one site owner has already shown the examiner where the first corrective action sits.

Then describe the decision the assessment has to support. It may be an initial assessment, an open finding from earlier work, a vendor connection, a planned change or a recovery question. Bring the existing assessment summaries and action lists with you, so the new work builds on what was already done and goes straight to the items still open.

Prepare a Controlled Record List

The records an assessment draws on usually exist somewhere in the utility already. Gather the available plant and remote site network diagrams and asset records, together with the inventories of engineering workstations, historians, telemetry and vendor access. Add the account approvals, the remote access records and the relevant network configurations with their export dates, the backup inventories, the record of the last actual restoration, the key software and vendor dependencies for the SCADA servers and the dosing controllers, and the existing incident and emergency plan responsibilities, exercise records and open actions. The examiner reads the restore record before the backup policy and the last vendor account revocation before the access policy, because those two show whether the paper is followed.

The assessment team agrees with you which of these records are necessary and how they will be exchanged. This is a preparation list for your own use, and sensitive material moves by the exchange method you agree with the team. The list commonly surfaces a cellular telemetry link waiting for an owner, a vendor account that has outlived its project and an emergency response plan kept only on the corporate file share, which belongs in a copy operators can reach during the incident it was written for; record each one, because they are the first corrective actions.

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Set the Operating Safeguards Before Any Method Is Approved

Identify the sensitive equipment, the allowed methods, the maintenance windows, the person who can stop work and the recovery arrangements, and state them in operations' own terms: every setpoint, dosing rate, alarm limit and controller mode stays where operations set it, and the operator defines the baseline indicators that call a stop. Operations and engineering approve any active validation in writing, naming the exact target, method, tool version and window, and a concern is validated on a laboratory or representative system while the production controller keeps running the plant.

Keep the Regulatory Measures Separate

Population served, service connections, customers and treatment plant design flow are different measures, and the program that applies to your system depends on which one its rules use. Record each figure with its own evidence, confirm the applicable program with the responsible owner and advisers, and then sign each row of the applicability record. A technical cybersecurity review is one defined workstream that contributes to the risk and resilience assessment, the emergency response plan or the certification, and the report names which contribution it makes.

Agree What the Assessment Will Deliver

Set the facilities, the evidence, the report audience, the boundaries, the action owners and the proposed follow up before work begins, so the report lands with the people who will act on it. The Water and Wastewater Assessment Deliverables guide describes what to expect. Global Digital Forensics has served businesses and their counsel since 1992, and the conversation that sets those terms is free.

Reviewed by Joseph Caruso, Founder, CEO and CTO, CISSP. Last reviewed October 31, 2026.

Start With a Free Consultation

The initial consultation is free, and requests are handled in confidence. On the first call a senior member of our team listens to the question you need answered, identifies the records and systems involved, and recommends the next step.

Call (800) 868-8189, answered 24/7, request a consultation at evestigate.com/contact, or email info@evestigate.com.

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