

AMWA cheers as rail strike averted

September 19, 2022 at 5:00 AM

Last week AMWA applauded a tentative agreement (<https://www.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/railroad-transportation-update>) between railroad operators and their union representatives, which averted a work stoppage that would have halted chlorine shipments to water systems and put public health at risk.

“This agreement has averted a major public health crisis,” CEO Tom Dobbins said in a statement (<https://www.amwa.net/press-releases/public-health-crisis-averted-end-rail-strike>). “If freight rail service had halted, water systems from coast to coast would have been at risk of running out of essential disinfectant chemicals, potentially leading to boil water notices for millions of Americans.”

Prior to the deal to avoid the strike, AMWA joined other water sector organizations in writing (<https://www.amwa.net/letter/letter-congress-potential-rail-strike>) to Congress to warn of the consequences of a work stoppage.

“Communities will be unable to produce safe drinking water, resulting in many boil water advisories and the threat of waterborne disease outbreaks,” the letter said. “Inadequate disinfection represents a threat to public health and a significant disruption to daily life, local economies, and critical services like hospitals and schools.”

As the threat of a work stoppage loomed, WaterISAC published an advisory (<https://www.waterisac.org/portal/advisory-potential-railroad-strike-could-cause-supply-chain-impacts-sector-updated-september>) that recommended several mitigating actions water systems could take to prepare, such as working with mutual aid contacts and warning the public about potential impacts on treatment operations. All water utility leaders are encouraged to regularly monitor WaterISAC’s (<https://www.waterisac.org/resources>)portal (<https://www.waterisac.org/resources>) for resources on how to combat constantly evolving security and operational threats.

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