



December 20, 2023

The Honorable Radhika Fox
Assistant Administrator, Office of Water
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

Via online submission at regulations.gov

Re: Docket ID No. EPA–HQ–OW–2023–0396; Request for Information: Products and Categories of Products Used in Water Infrastructure Programs

Dear Assistant Administrator Fox,

The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) is pleased to have the opportunity to provide information on the domestic availability of multiple products used in the construction, alteration, and/or maintenance of water infrastructure. AMWA is an organization of the largest publicly owned drinking water systems in the United States. Members individually serve over 100,000 customers and collectively provide clean drinking water to over 160 million people. Access to products and materials used in water infrastructure and maintenance is essential for drinking water utilities to continue this vital service. Currently, drinking water systems across the country are experiencing decreased material availability, delivery delays, increased costs, and labor shortages. Compliance with potential new and current regulation, such as PFAS and lead service line replacement, could be impacted by limitations in products, materials, and labor availability.

In its request for information (RFI), EPA inquired about the availability of a list of products or categories of products used in water system infrastructure and maintenance. AMWA members have indicated that the following items listed in the RFI have been difficult to acquire due to large demand, increased lead times, and delays in manufacturer certifications, with no signs of improvement in the near future:

- lead service line replacement components, particularly piping material, meter boxes and lids;

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- valve actuators (electric/pneumatic/manual);
- pumps and pump motors;
- PFAS treatment systems and media, especially granular activated carbon (GAC);
- controls and switches;
- backup power products and systems;
- water meters and associated communications devices; and
- Other- transformers and panels, water treatment chemicals, brass products.

EPA also requested information on the Domestic Materials Sourcing and Manufacturing demand and on product lead times. Some drinking water systems must submit bids for materials annually, so anticipating the needs for domestic parts in projects has so far presented challenges particularly as conditions continue to change rapidly. In addition, lead times for materials have been extremely high, again, with no indication that this will change soon. For many materials, lead times can range from several weeks to several years. Some examples include:

- Transformers – up to two years;
- Corp stops – 26-32 weeks;
- Meters – 26 weeks;
- Pipelines – 8 months;
- Valves – 12 months;
- Electrical motor control cabinets – 2 years; and
- Brass fittings – 8 months.

AMWA members have heard from contractors, suppliers, and manufactures that there are several reasons for these delays. Consistently, one of the biggest reasons has been workforce shortages. While workforce shortages are not unique to the manufacturing sector, it is increasingly difficult to hire, train, and retain workers. Inadequate staffing has slowed down production and delivery, accounting for many of the delays drinking water systems have encountered. This issue is not easily remedied and will take several years to resolve, assuming an increase in the number of workers is needed to improve supply chain timeframes. Additionally, production facility shutdowns, delays in obtaining materials/products from overseas, and simply high demand amid low supplies are other reasons for these major delays.

EPA seeks feedback on additional support or incentives needed to ensure a sufficient supply of products that meet BABA requirements. With little indication that these delays and issues will be resolved soon, EPA must account for supply chain interruptions and workforce shortages in rulemaking development. Public drinking water systems work tirelessly to maintain clean, safe drinking water for their customers and are proud of their partnership with EPA to implement and comply with new and current regulations. Drinking water systems have little to no control over supply chain delays. Therefore, EPA must take these challenges into account when implementing new regulations. As EPA continues to work toward new and revised national primary drinking water regulations, AMWA urges EPA to use this information to ensure drinking water systems

have the support and resources needed to address these challenges in the form of guidance, clarity on any available waivers under BABA, and financial assistance for the resulting increases in costs associated with compliance.

AMWA appreciates the opportunity to provide this information to EPA as it evaluates the current information available on the domestic market for products used by drinking water utilities to provide safe drinking water to millions of Americans. Our hope is that this information will better inform EPA during its rulemaking processes and assist in implementing EPA and other federal agency's water infrastructure programs. If you have any questions, please reach out to Brian Redder (Redder@amwa.net), AMWA's Manager of Regulatory and Scientific Affairs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Dobbins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and "D".

Tom Dobbins
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Timothy Connor, OWM
Leslie Corcelli, OGWDW

