

Water Policy Issue Brief

SUMMARY

The Utilities Technology Council (UTC) supports water utilities through its advocacy work in Washington as well as through education and training on information and communications technology for water utility operations.

Today's water infrastructure investments are focused on digitalization, smart devices, advanced security and automation, all of which require IT/OT integration and reliable, real-time communications networks. UTC is the only association focused on the nexus of telecom and technology for utilities of all types and sizes.

ADVOCACY FOR WATER UTILITIES

Access to spectrum is essential for the day-to-day delivery of reliable utility service and for water utility efforts to upgrade and modernize their water delivery systems. One of UTC's main advocacy priorities centers around spectrum availability for wireless communications. Utilities and other critical-infrastructure industries use radio spectrum for data and voice communications which ensure the safe, secure and reliable delivery of electricity, water, and natural gas.

Spectrum allows water personnel to communicate with devices to monitor, maintain, upgrade, and repair water lines. It is vital as new "smart" technologies promise

to give customers more control over their water usage.

To provide suitable coverage and capacity, utility spectrum should be in a frequency range that will provide favorable propagation and offer sufficient broadband or wideband for the increasing amount of traffic that is carried over utility communications networks. On behalf of its members, UTC advocates for access to additional licensed spectrum and to protect existing spectrum that water utilities use for their wireless communications systems.

One such issue is the 6 GHz spectrum band, where the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) expanded the band to unlicensed use. Hundreds of utilities, including water companies, use the 6 GHz band for mission-critical communications. Allowing unlicensed users into the band raises concerns over interference to existing utility systems. UTC is partnering with water stakeholders to advocate for the protection of this band from interference.

CO-LOCATION

UTC's members frequently manage wireless collocation programs for siting small cells and macro wireless facilities on their infrastructure. UTC advocates for policies that protect utility infrastructure to ensure safety, security and reliability and to

provide utilities with just compensation for third parties to attach equipment to provide commercial communications services.

Supply-chain risks and security are also key priorities. Water utilities are committed to mitigating the risks posed by their supply chains. While it is important to protect our utility devices from attack, it is also important to be able to afford the devices required to deliver safe, reliable service. UTC has been involved in federal partnerships to develop tools that will not only assist water utilities and others to assess the security of the information and communications technology they are deploying on their systems but also provide them with ways to conduct risk assessment.

ABOUT UTC

Founded in 1948, UTC was initially created to advocate for the allocation of additional radio spectrum for power utilities.

Over the years, UTC has evolved into a dynamic organization that represents electric, gas and water utilities critical infrastructure companies and other industry stakeholders. From its headquarters in Washington, UTC provides information,

products and services that help members:

- Manage their telecommunications and information technology more effectively and efficiently
- Voice their concerns or support of policy proposals to legislators and regulators
- Engage in peer-to-peer relationships with other telecom and IT professionals
- Interface with manufacturers and telecommunications carriers on issues like cybersecurity

UTC is the bridge between the critical water sectors and the telecommunications industry. On behalf of our core members, we advocate for policies on issues ranging from spectrum access necessary for routine, day-to-day operation of their systems to cybersecurity, broadband expansion, and much more.

For more information, visit UTC.org.

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