

Halifax Water has not provided sufficient oversight of its operational technology (SCADA system) security risks, Auditor General, Evangeline Colman-Sadd, said in her report released today, March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Halifax Water’s SCADA system is a critical operational component for the delivery of HRM’s water supply. The audit found Halifax Water needs more emphasis on cybersecurity for its SCADA system. Many related recommendations from its 2010 SCADA master plan, and 2016 and 2019 consultant reports are outstanding, and internal IT committees were not regularly discussing SCADA risks and plans. “The cybersecurity program at Halifax Water is not as mature as I expected for a utility responsible for critical public infrastructure,” the auditor general said.

The audit found there were gaps in cyber security and physical security policies and procedures; and, important SCADA system protection and reliability procedures, such as change and patch management, were informal. “To limit potential impacts on the supply of quality water, it is critical that risks are effectively managed to maintain control and availability of the SCADA system” said Colman-Sadd.

The auditor general’s report includes 21 recommendations which Halifax Water management agreed to implement. The report is available on the auditor general’s website at <https://hrmauditorgeneral.ca/published-reports>.

Given the sensitive nature of SCADA security, there is also a confidential report with additional information and recommendations. This report was shared with Halifax Water management, and in-camera with the Halifax Water Board of Commissioners and the HRM Audit and Finance Standing Committee.

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Halifax Water’s SCADA system is a critical operational component for the delivery of HRM’s water supply. The audit found gaps in internal policies and procedures, and informal procedures meant to reduce risks for the security and availability of the SCADA system.

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