

The American Society of Civil Engineers' newest report, *Failure to Act: The Economic Impact of Current Investment Trends in Water and Wastewater Treatment*

Infrastructure cites evidence that the public and private sectors must come together to address water infrastructure challenges facing U.S. municipalities and governments.

Failure to Act which was released December 15, provides substantive support for the need to accelerate investment in water and wastewater infrastructure to ensure the quality of our water for health, safety, and the economy, now and for future generations.

The Report estimates that as investment needs continue to escalate and current funding trends continue to fall short of the needs, the capital investment needs for the nation's water and wastewater infrastructure will total \$126 billion by 2020 and \$195 billion by 2040. It reports that if this underinvestment in pipes, treatment plants and pumps continues, it will likely result in unreliable water service and wastewater treatment. According to the report, this can result in water disruptions, impediments to emergency response, and damage to other types of infrastructure, as well as water shortages (from failing infrastructure and drought) that may result in unsanitary conditions which increase the likelihood of public health issues.

"Water is the essential underpinning of our society. It's not only for drinking, cooking and cleaning; it's for fire protection, manufacturing, business and industry, and overall economic vitality. Allowing water and wastewater systems to continue to lapse is putting our society at serious risk.

"In the U.S., water services are often so reliable that many of us do not think twice about what comes out of our faucets or what it's been through to become safe enough to drink. There's an obvious cost to assure water quality and reliability, but most of us never think about it unless for some reason we have to go without water service. When you consider the amount of money consumers annually spend on bottled water, which is about \$21 billion, compared to the amount spent annually on operating and maintaining the water systems that sustain us, which is about \$29 billion, you can really see how water services are tremendously undervalued in our society. Imagine what could be done if that \$21 billion was put toward upgrading the country's water and wastewater systems instead.

"When we invest in repairing our water systems, we're also helping to ensure the continued stability of the other infrastructure, as well as the high-quality water systems that support our continued health, fire protection systems, and economic vitality. Additionally, repairing our water systems leads to the creation of a significant number of jobs."

Another [report](#) by the Cadmus Group for The U.S. Conference of Mayors also determined that fixing and maintaining our water and wastewater systems stimulates the nation's

economy and creates jobs. This report states that for every one dollar invested in improving our water and wastewater systems, it is estimated that Gross Domestic Product increases by \$6.35 in the long-term.