Cooling the Cloud/Considerations for Water Utilities Evaluating Data Center Development: American Water Works Association Issues Report



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

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The American Water Works Association ("AWWA") issued a report titled:

… Cooling the Cloud: Considerations for Water Utilities Evaluating Data Center Development ("Report").

AWWA describes the Report as:

…. a practical planning and decision-making framework for utilities, addressing present and future water supply reliability, recovery of growth-related costs, wastewater impacts and environmental considerations.

The Report is intended to assist utilities in:

- Screening proposed projects.
- Identifying information gaps.
- Evaluating utility capacity.
- Comparing infrastructure and water supply alternatives.
- Establishing development conditions.
- Preparing for negotiations with data center owners and developers.

Additional purposes include considerations involving:

- Utility reliability.
- Financial sustainability.
- Environmental stewardship.
- Regulatory obligations.
- Community expectations.

AWWA advises that data centers should be generally evaluated as large industrial customers requiring:

- Early engagement.
- Detailed engineering review.
- Transparent demand projections.
- Clearly assigned responsibilities.

Key components of the Report include:

- Data center classification and infrastructure demand.

- Cooling technologies: engineering characteristics and water demand.
- Water balance methodology and demand modeling.
- Water source and cooling water quality requirements.
- Wastewater characterization, pretreatment, and discharge control.
- Water reuse integration, minimum liquid discharge, and zero liquid discharge.
- Financial frameworks, rate structures, and cost recovery.
- Contractual provisions and development agreements.
- Regulatory framework and emerging policy.
- Community engagement and transparency.
- Utility questionnaire and response analysis.

A copy of the Report can be found here.