

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of Kansas

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**INDICTMENT: KANSAS MAN INDICTED FOR
TAMPERING WITH A PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM**

TOPEKA, KAN. – A Kansas man has been indicted on a federal charge accusing him of tampering with a public water system, Acting U.S. Attorney Duston Slinkard said today.

WYATT A. TRAVNICHEK, 22, of Ellsworth County, Kansas is charged with one count of tampering with a public water system and one count of reckless damage to a protected computer during unauthorized access.

“Our office is committed to maintaining and improving its partnership with the state of Kansas in the administration and implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Duston Slinkard. “Drinking water that is considered safe is essential to the protection of the public’s health.”

The indictment alleges that on or about March 27, 2019, in the District of Kansas, Travnichek knowingly accessed the Ellsworth County Rural Water District’s protected computer system without authorization. During this unauthorized access, it is alleged Travnichek performed activities that shut down the processes at the facility which affect the facilities cleaning and disinfecting procedures with the intention of harming the Ellsworth Rural Water District No. 1, also known as Post Rock Rural Water District.

“By illegally tampering with a public drinking water system, the defendant threatened the safety and health of an entire community,” said Lance Ehrig, Special Agent in Charge of EPA’s Criminal Investigation Division in Kansas. “EPA and its law enforcement partners are committed to upholding the laws designed to protect our drinking water systems from harm or threat of harm. Today’s indictment sends a clear message that individuals who intentionally violate these laws will be vigorously prosecuted.”

Upon conviction, the alleged crimes carry the following penalties:

Tampering with a Public Water System: Up to 20 years in federal prison and a fine up to \$250,000.

Reckless Damage to a Protected Computer During Unauthorized Access: Up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine up to \$250,000.

The Environmental Protection Agency, Kansas Bureau of Investigation and Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted the investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Christine E. Kenney is prosecuting the case.

In all cases, defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The indictments merely contain allegations of criminal conduct.

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