

Utilities Helping Utilities:

An Action Plan for Mutual Aid and Assistance Networks for Water and Wastewater Utilities

www.NationalWARN.org

A Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network (WARN) is a network of utilities helping other utilities to respond to and recover from emergencies. The purpose of a WARN is to provide a method whereby water/wastewater utilities that have sustained or anticipate damages from natural or human-caused incidents can provide and receive emergency aid and assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services as necessary from other water/wastewater utilities. The objective is to provide rapid, short-term deployment of emergency services to restore the critical operations of the affected water/wastewater utility.

The backbone of the WARN concept is the Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement. It is in the Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement where provisions for network activation, reimbursement, liability and other issues are mutually agreed upon by participating utilities. Participation is voluntary, there is no obligation to respond, and there is no direct cost to become a member of the network.

The WARN framework provides a forum for establishing and maintaining emergency contacts, providing expedited access to specialized resources needed to respond to and recovery from emergencies that disrupt water/wastewater utilities, and facilitating training that specifically focuses on the exchange of resources during an emergency.

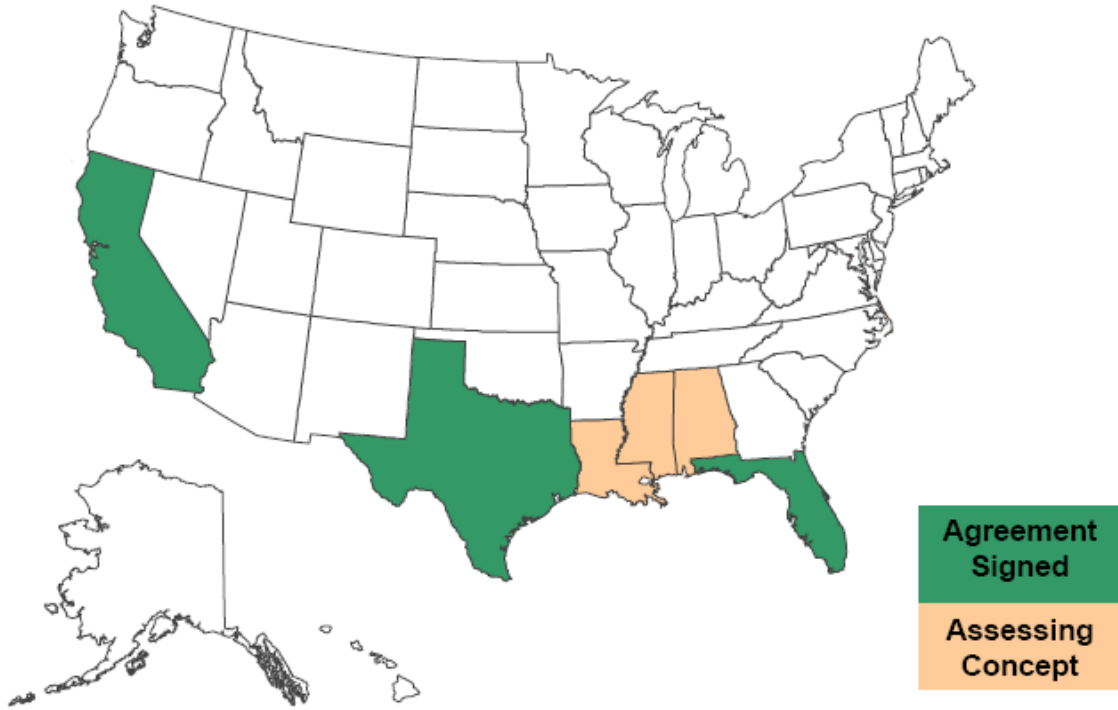
Events such as 9/11, the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the 1997 Red River flood, and more recently Hurricanes Katrina and Rita identified a need for water and wastewater utilities to create intrastate mutual aid and assistance programs because:

- utilities require specialized resources to sustain operations;
- government response agencies and other critical infrastructure rely on water supplies;
- utilities must provide their own support in the immediate aftermath of an incident as state and federal resources will not likely be available or deployed for up to 72 hours;
- large events impact regional areas, making response from adjacent utilities impractical;
- disasters impact utility employees and their families creating greater need for relief;
- agreements must be established and in place prior to an incident for federal reimbursement eligibility; and
- engagement in mutual aid/assistance supports Department of Homeland Security requirements for compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS)

The growth in WARNs as shown on the enclosed maps is due to many utilities wanting to increase their preparedness and overall resiliency of the communities they serve.

For more information on WARNs, contact Kevin Morley of the American Water Works Association at (202) 628-8303 or via email at kmorley@awwa.org.

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