

BACKGROUND



The mission of Water/Wastewater Agency Response Networks (WARN) is to provide expedited access to the specialized resources needed to respond to and recover from natural and human caused events that disrupt drinking water and wastewater utilities.

Unlike existing statewide mutual aid agreements, WARN membership is open to both public and private utilities. By adopting the WARN approach to mutual aid and assistance, drinking water and wastewater utilities in each state are able to sign a single agreement covering issues such as indemnification, workers' compensation, and reimbursement. The agreement also allows for utilities to share equipment, personnel, and other resources to respond effectively to any crisis.

A WARN's success relies on a strong base of member utilities willing to help one another during emergencies. For this reason, no utility is too large or too small to benefit from WARN, and each additional member enhances the probability of a successful response to an emergency.

ROLE OF STATE PRIMACY AGENCY IN WARN

State primacy agencies have been integral in the development of WARN programs across the nation. While WARN leadership varies by state, the concept of including the state primacy agency as an advisor to the governing board is one that is widely accepted. One key role state primacy agencies fill is to help generate support for WARN and educate utilities about the program.

While the program is focused on "Utilities Helping Utilities," state primacy agencies have assisted in the organization of trainings and support (administratively, financially, and organizationally). State primacy agencies have also played a vital role in ensuring the success of WARN through liaison and outreach initiatives with the state's emergency management agency and through coordination of disaster response support activities.

WATER SECTOR SUPPORT

Eight major water organizations signed the *Joint Policy Statement on Mutual Aid and Assistance Networks* in February 2006, encouraging utilities and local/state governments to establish intrastate mutual aid and assistance networks. Among the signatories, the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators committed to the "Utilities Helping Utilities" concept and continues to encourage state drinking water programs to discuss mutual aid and assistance initiatives with their peer agencies and with the water systems for which they have oversight responsibility.

Additional support is available through outreach products developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to aid utilities in the development of mutual aid and assistance networks, found at: http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/home.cfm?program_id=8#maa

WARN RESPONSES

A number of WARNs have been involved in past response activities, both providing and receiving assistance.

- City of Alamosa, Colorado, Water Contamination Incident (2008) – Colorado WARN member response consisted of incident management and sampling expertise, as well as resources for flushing and disinfecting the water system.
- Hurricanes Umberto and Ike (2007-2008) – Texas WARN member response included systems locating generators and coordinating support to utilities who lost power.
- Southern California Fires (2007) – California WARN member response included systems who provided over 100 different resources, including operators, mechanics, electricians, water quality technicians, water buffaloes for firefighting, and bottled water for affected citizens.
- Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005) – Florida WARN member response included systems who cleaned electrical components and lift stations, fixed electrical motors and pumps, and repaired water main leaks.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT WARN

| FALSE | TRUE |
|---|---|
| WARN participation is limited to utilities. | ➤ While it is true that only utilities sign the agreement, participation of response partners playing an active role in the coordination of resources and response activities is a vital component of a successful WARN. |
| WARN membership is expensive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Existing WARNs do not require a membership or retainer fee. ➤ All member utilities volunteer time to develop and maintain their WARN. |
| WARN membership obligates systems to send resources. | ➤ No member is obligated to send resources if they decide not to for any reason. |
| WARN membership precludes participation in other mutual aid and assistance agreements, or utilizing resources from contractors or associations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The <i>Joint Policy Statement</i> signed by the wastewater and water organizations supports mutual aid and assistance networks of all kinds and the WARN program is not the only option. ➤ WARN recognizes the need for member utilities to also access local agreements and statewide programs, and does not attempt to replace them. |

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Contact John Whitler of EPA (whitler.john@epa.gov) or visit:
http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/home.cfm?program_id=8#maa.