

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.

TRIBAL WATER SYSTEMS AS WARN MEMBERS

WARN recognizes that a tribal government is an independent sovereign nation. Tribal legal counsel should evaluate the *Model WARN Agreement* or the *WARN Agreement for the State* in which the tribe is located to determine if the agreement impacts its sovereign status or established tribal laws in any way.

ROLE OF TRIBAL WATER SYSTEMS IN WARN

All member utilities have equal rights, regardless of size or type of operations. Tribal systems are eligible to serve on the various WARN committees and subcommittees, as well as serve as the WARN Chair, if elected to the position. Tribal systems, like all members, can request or send resources during an emergency, but are not obligated to do so if they decide not to for any reason.

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. 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 is geared toward large systems only.	➤ Public, private, and sovereign tribal systems of all sizes have equal rights in WARN.
WARN membership is too expensive for tribal systems to participate.	➤ Existing WARNs do not require a membership or retainer fee. ➤ All member utilities volunteer time to develop and maintain their WARN.
WARN membership obligates tribal systems to send resources.	➤ Adoption of and participation in existing WARN agreements by a tribal system is strictly voluntary. ➤ No member is obligated to send resources if they decide not to for any reason.
WARN membership replaces other emergency or disaster assistance.	➤ Existing WARN agreements do not offset, replace, or negate, in whole or in part, any emergency or disaster aid or resources for which a participating tribal system may be entitled or eligible under any Federal, state, or local law.
WARN membership precludes tribal systems from participating in other mutual aid and assistance agreements, or utilizing resources from contractors or associations.	➤ The <i>Joint Policy Statement</i> 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 with another tribe, or another government, and does not attempt to replace them.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Contact John Whitley of EPA (whitley.john@epa.gov) or visit:

http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/home.cfm?program_id=8#maa.