

### 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 WASTEWATER SYSTEMS IN WARN

Every existing WARN includes wastewater systems as members and all member utilities have equal rights. WARN relies on the involvement of its members to serve on various WARN committees and subcommittees, as well as serve as the WARN Chair, if elected to the position. As a member, utilities 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. Among the signatories, the Water Environment Federation committed to the "Utilities Helping Utilities" concept and encourages its members to discuss mutual aid and assistance with their peers.

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](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 water, not wastewater systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Wastewater utilities and associations sit on many of the WARN steering committees.</li> <li>➢ One of the key intentions of creating the WARN systems was to support the response and recovery of wastewater systems following Hurricane Katrina.</li> </ul>
WARN membership is expensive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Existing WARNs do not require a membership or retainer fee.</li> <li>➢ All member utilities volunteer time to develop and maintain their WARN.</li> </ul>
WARN membership obligates systems to send resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ No member is obligated to send resources if they decide not to for any reason.</li> </ul>
WARN membership precludes participation in other mutual aid and assistance agreements, or utilizing resources from contractors or associations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ 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.</li> <li>➢ WARN recognizes the need for member utilities to also access local agreements and statewide programs, and does not attempt to replace them.</li> </ul>

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Contact John Whittler of EPA ([whittler.john@epa.gov](mailto:whittler.john@epa.gov)) or visit:  
[http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/home.cfm?program\\_id=8#maa](http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/home.cfm?program_id=8#maa).