



What's New At CEU Plan

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Sign Up With Your
Local WARN
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Natural and manmade disasters and emergencies can happen anywhere. Sad to say, but no place is "safe." And any type of major event—hurricane, ice storm, terrorist attack, or even an major accidental power outage like the one that hit California, Arizona and Mexico in September 2011 can render your treatment plants, lift stations, or distribution/collection system useless.

When disaster strikes, you need help and you need it now. But getting help from neighboring utilities or those in other states will take a while—unless you are part of a Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network or WARN.

Mutual Aid Agreement

A WARN is a network of utilities helping utilities to respond to emergencies. The heart of a WARN system is the common Mutual Aid Agreement, which includes important details like reimbursement for labor and equipment, insurance requirements, liability, procedures and responsibilities.

This pre-established agreement takes the "red tape" out of the process, and allows for a rapid response from water and wastewater utilities after an emergency. In many cases, responders can mobilize within 24 hours. Being a member of a WARN has other benefits as well, including improved planning, and access to specialized equipment, tools and trained personnel.

The U.S. EPA has a short [informational video](#) on WARN programs on their website.

Communication Tools

WARN's include communication tools—typically including a website—to channel information on the emergency, including requests and availability of assistance, equipment, personnel, etc. A central coordinating committee or management team matches resources to needs and helps to facilitate responses. Utilities needing assistance sign on to the website and make requests based on their needs. For instance, a small utility may request a portable emergency generator, with truck, driver and operator to help pump down lift stations after a major storm. Requests may be for licensed operators to help run treatment plants if their existing staff has been injured in an earthquake. Responding utilities would enter the equipment and personnel available. It's best to enter information in the most specific manner possible, for instance instead of stating a need for a portable generator state the need for a 30KW portable generator for a small lift station.

Success Stories

WARNs have had great success facilitating responses to a number of emergencies, including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma (FlaWARN), the blizzard in Detroit, Oregon (OrWARN), California wildfires and the Baja, California earthquake (CalWARN) and even a Salmonella outbreak in Alamosa, Colorado (CoWARN).

As of July 2012, a total of 48 states had implemented WARN systems for their water and wastewater utilities.

Funding for WARN systems is typically a combined effort between regulatory agencies, rural water associations and sometimes the utilities themselves. The American Water Works Association hosts the [National WARN](#) page where more information is available. If your utility has not already signed a WARN agreement, please encourage your management team to do so before the next disaster strikes.

