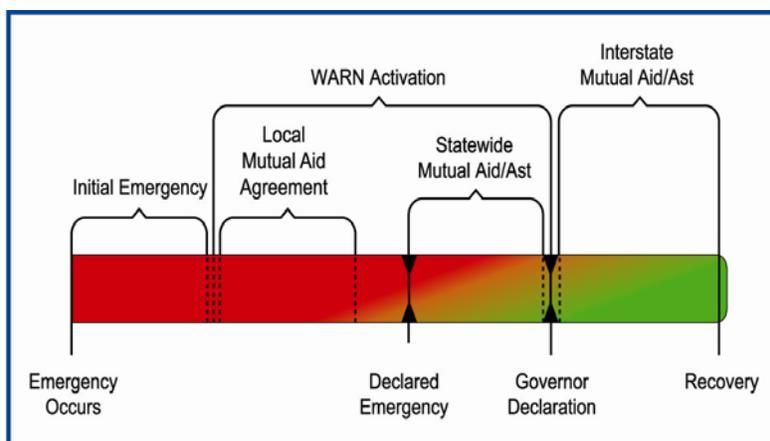


Water Sector Mutual Aid and Assistance: Utilities Helping Utilities

Background: The events of 9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, and severe flooding in New England and the Midwest in 2007 have shown the need for water and wastewater systems to share resources to overcome disasters occurring at a local or regional level. The Water Sector's professional associations, with support from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Security Division (WSD), are working to encourage local utilities in every State to establish intrastate mutual aid and assistance agreements between both drinking water and wastewater utilities.

These agreements, formally known as Water/Wastewater Agency Response Networks (WARN), embrace a utility-driven model to facilitate an effective and efficient flow of personnel and resources after an emergency. 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. Unlike existing statewide mutual aid agreements, WARN membership is open to both public and private utilities. The agreement also allows for utilities to share equipment, personnel, and other resources required to respond effectively to any crisis. WARN helps utilities reduce the typical response "gap" between local agreements and activation of statewide agreements, as it does not require an emergency declaration prior to activation.

WARN Activation Timeline: Reducing the Response "Gap" During Emergencies



Mission: The mission of WARN is to provide expedited access to specialized resources needed to respond to and recover from natural and human caused events that disrupt public and private drinking water and wastewater utilities.

Purpose: EPA supports the development of WARNs to:

- Promote the establishment of intrastate mutual aid and assistance agreements to enhance preparedness, improve incident response, and provide utility resilience in the face of a disaster.
- Support individual WARNs by providing tools and technical assistance such as tabletop exercise materials and guidance on developing WARN implementation protocols.
- Support Department of Homeland Security requirements for compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Recognition: Due to the outstanding support EPA and the American Water Works Association (AWWA) provided to this grassroots, utility-driven effort, the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) awarded them the 2006 "Partners in Preparedness" award. The model agreement implemented by WARN is recognized as a "Model Agreement" by the DHS/FEMA National Integration Center (NIC) Incident Management Systems Division.

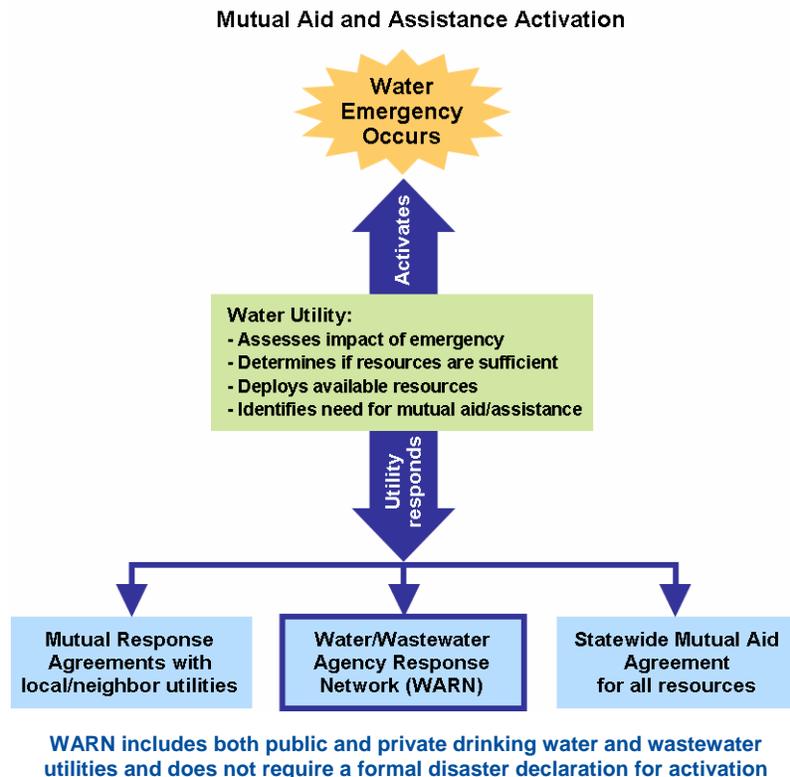
Stakeholders:

- Utility owner/operators as the key participants
- State water and wastewater primacy agencies participate as advisors and in a supporting role
- State emergency management/homeland security agencies help integrate WARN into state programs
- Water Sector professional associations such as AWWA, NRWA, WEF, AMWA, ASDWA, NACWA, NAWC, and ASIWPCA, who in February 2006, signed a joint policy statement on mutual aid and assistance titled, “Utilities Helping Utilities,” to promote programs such as WARN

EPA Support: EPA is fully committed to the development of WARNs, providing extensive outreach, facilitation, and technical support through:

- WARN Workshops – An EPA grant to AWWA supported twelve WARN Workshops with participation from 48 states and the District of Columbia. Workshop speakers included EPA staff, as well as other WARN experts supported through EPA contracts.
- Work Products and Outreach – EPA facilitated the development of the March 2006 “Utilities Helping Utilities Action Plan,” numerous fact sheets, a Frequently Asked Questions document, and has presented the WARN concept at a number of national conferences and meetings.

Next Steps: The number of statewide agreements has more than tripled in the past year, leading to a better prepared and more resilient Water Sector. This success has led to a need to exercise and validate the processes and protocols utilized during activation and implementation of a WARN. EPA has responded to that need by developing tabletop exercises and a protocols guidance document. The tabletop exercises will help WARN members coordinate more effectively with state and local emergency management agencies, state primacy agencies, and federal agencies. They will also enable participating utilities and agencies to define their roles and responsibilities more precisely and realistically.



While initially focused on intrastate networks, interstate mutual aid and assistance agreements may be needed to share resources across state lines. EPA and WARN partners are exploring the use of mechanisms, such as the National Emergency Management Agency’s (NEMA) Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), to meet this critical objective. EPA has developed an outreach document, titled “EMAC Tips for the Water Sector,” which includes information the Water Sector can apply to utilize EMAC more effectively when requesting or providing mutual aid and assistance across state lines.

For Additional Information: Visit www.NationalWARN.org, or contact John Whitler of EPA (whitler.john@epa.gov).