**States and WARNs – Working Together**

**December 17, 2014**

**Webinar Summary**

The goal of the webinar was to showcase five successful and unique collaboration models between state agencies and their WARNs in order to exchange ideas that could help participants strengthen their own existing relationships.

***NOTE:*** *Because a complete recording of the webinar along with the slide presentations is available, this document summarizes key points from each presentation.*

# *“CalWARN - HOW CalWARN MAKES IT WORK HERE IN CALIFORNIA” - Joe Crisologo (State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water)*

* Born in response to previous disasters dating back to 1992, CalWARN was created in response to the identified need to establish a mutual aid and assistance (MAA) network for water and wastewater utilities consistent with the already existing California master state MAA. Since then, CalWARN has evolved as the networks mature and in response to a growing list of hazards.
* Members include drinking water and wastewater utilities as well as partners such as the state, interdependent infrastructures and other groups. CalWARN meets on a monthly basis to discuss ongoing activities and set priorities. CalWARN works with support partners to identify funding opportunities to support training and other activities.
* The Division of Drinking Water (DDW) participates in meetings of the CalWARN Steering Committee. Joe recommended that each WARN have a written agreement, an operations plan and other documentation to help members understand the processes involved with requesting and receiving aid. A good understanding by members is the foundation of a good network.
* DDW encourages its CalWARN members to establish working relationships with entities managing interdependent infrastructures as well as small utilities that may need assistance.
* DDW has established a Water Sector specific position at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to support coordination among utilities and other partners. DDW is training staff to fill this position.
* CalWARN activated last August for the Napa earthquake disaster. Its activation raised CalWARN’s profile in the area and resulted in more utilities becoming members.
* A notable challenge has been the constant change of personnel at all organizations. To overcome this, CalWARN is working to continually raise awareness and reinforce the work it does.

# *“States and WARNs – Working Together: NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (NYS DOH), BUREAU OF WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION [BWSP] AND NYWARN” – Bill Gilday (NYS DOH BWSP)*

* DOH established NYWARN in 2008. Membership includes 150 utilities as well as state agencies and associations.
* DOH promotes and encourages utilities to join NYWARN at every opportunity, including meetings with local and states agencies. Increasing the membership of NYWARN helps ensure problems are solved locally, which frees local public health agencies and DOH to response to other aspects of a disaster.
* DOH received funding from AWWA and EPA to promote the program and covers costs associated with maintaining the network (e.g., administration, staff costs, website, travel costs, meetings, training, and exercises).
* Following the Superstorm Sandy disaster, the state OEM (Office of Emergency Management) recognized the benefits of NYWARN especially in reducing the burden on the SEOC if problems are handled at the local level. NY OEM asked that NYWARN have a presence at the SEOC. DOH has gotten NYWARN members to attend SEOC orientation training.
* DOH and the state’s emergency management staff set up a stockpile to support potable water needs, with resources such as portable filtration units, water tankers and water buffalos.
	+ DOH conducted three trainings sessions for NYWARN members, including 22 operators from 11 counties, to learn how to run the filter units, realizing that smaller systems might need the units, but may not have the manpower to run them. DOH is working with NYWARN members to be involved with a maintenance schedule for the units that involve regularly plugging them into water systems to keep them in a readiness state.
	+ During Sandy, fill stations and disinfection sites were needed to host incoming water tankers. NYWARN member utilities responded to the call by offering their facilities as sites for the fill stations. DOH is working with NYWARN to formalize this process by pre-identifying locations for fill stations and disinfection sites at utilities that are willing to help.
* Given the impacts to the Water Sector, DOH received a grant from CDC to assess the response of utilities following Sandy. The NYWARN Chair wrote a letter in support of DOH’s grant application. NYWARN members have been doing presentations at DOH led meeting with impacted utilities to understand what worked, what did not, and identify improvements.

# *“UT-WARN UTAH-WATER/WASTEWATER AGENCY RESOURCE NETWORK” - Kim Dyches (UT DEQ, Division of Drinking Water [DDW])*

* Following its collaboration with utilities in preparation for the 2002 Olympics, the Utah DDW understood the value of and need for Mutual Aid agreements to be in place between utilities. DDW found the WARN model to be a good fit for setting up a network in UT and established UT WARN in partnership with the Division of Water Quality and other organizations including the Rural Water Association (RWA).
* A letter sent by DDW Director to encourage utilities to join UT WARN was instrumental to its foundation.
* UT WARN has access to the state’s incident management system WebEOC and is an active player in training and exercises.
* UT WARN stakeholders include utility operators and managers, associations, and state and federal agencies, including law enforcement.
* RWA of Utah manages the UT WARN website provides access to upcoming training, member lists, forms needed during a activation, a link to emergency resources, and a Twitter feed.
* UT WARN members have settled on Twitter and texts as the main sources of communication between members and stakeholders. UT WARN uses Twitter to provide updates and communicate resource needs during activation as well as simply to keep members engaged during “quiet times”. For example, following a recent pump outage at a utility, UT WARN used twitter to request a replacement pump and received it within 4 hours. As a service to its members, UT WARN has created section on the website that includes instructions on how to create and receive tweets.

# *“NHWARN aka: NH PUBLIC WORKS MUTUAL AID PROGRAM” - Johnna McKenna (NH Department of Environmental Services Drinking Water & Groundwater Bureau)*

* NH WARN has taken a nontraditional approach and is actually part of the larger NH Public Works Mutual Aid Program. This Program has been active since 1998. Following discussions with Drinking Water & Groundwater Bureau after the need for enhanced water related emergency response activities became apparent, the Public Works Mutual Aid Program invited the Water Sector to join.
* The Program covers drinking water and wastewater water utilities, and public works agencies as well as building inspectors. It has 160 members comprising a mix of single systems, counties, and village districts. State legislation was changed to allow for privately owned systems to join the Program, two of which are the largest utilities in the state.
* The Program has a board of volunteers representing various groups and holds quarterly meetings. Members pay an annual $25 fee, which covers support of the website, resources lists, mailing lists and others administrative and financial functions.
* The Program can help utilities find needed resources, including equipment as well as personnel, who can help impacted communities with paperwork.
* State agencies can be involved as non-voting members and includes representation from Environmental Services, Transportation, Emergency Management and others. Emergency Management promotes the Program and trains its field staff to ensure communities work first through the Program when seeking relief or support. Emergency Management, the Drinking Water & Groundwater Bureau, and the Program are collaborating on plans to conduct exercises to improve their coordination.
* To help generate interest in and understanding of the WARN concept, the Drinking Water & Groundwater Bureau used the EPA security grant to hire a circuit rider dedicated to promote the Program statewide and develop an operations plan. While this position is no longer active, it did help to get NH WARN underway. The Program also set up a “refer a friend” promotion to encourage membership (the annual fee was waived for new members and those that referred new members), but the promotion was not as successful as hoped.
* Notable challenges have been how to sustain the Program during “quiet times” as well as not to overwhelm members that serve on multiple groups. The Program is looking to identify ways to get new board members as well as how to combine separate resources lists for utilities and building inspectors.

# *FL - WATER FACILITY ER&R NETWORK – Ken Carter (FDEP-Source & Drinking Water Program)*

* Following multiple disasters, most notably with Hurricane Andrew in 1993 and the hurricane season of 2004, Florida established its StormTracker system as well as FlaWARN. StormTracker was set up to better track unfolding storms. FlaWARN was set up to better integrate utilities into response and recovery.
* Established in 2005, FlaWARN works to meet the needs of Florida’s 19 million water and wastewater customers; be aware of the economics of response and recovery, and be mindful of the continuously evolving threat environments. In fact, FlaWARN was the first WARN to complete an EMAC deployment (during Hurricane Katrina).
* FDEP used the EPA security grant to fund the management of FlaWARN, including its website. FDEP helped FlaWARN become a credentialed member of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT). FDEP also established a chair at the SEOC for a WARN liaison.
* For its part, FlaWARN participates in state and Federal training and exercises and assists utilities with local trainings.
* StormTracker is a state developed water utility event tracking and management web based application. A natural outgrowth of the need to manage information and impacts from frequent hurricanes and tropical storms, it is used to maintain common operational awareness at the SEOC between partners across the state. It can simultaneously track multiple storms and includes a utility portal to allow utilities to self report their status, request assistance and track notices and orders.
* StormTracker has four portal applications – administrative, regulatory offices and network partners such as FlaWARN, affected utilities, and a “read only” portal to share information more broadly. This has proved to be a great benefit to utilities and the state in their common desire to protect public health but in a way that saves both time and money.

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:**

* **Q: To Joe Crisologo: How is CalWarn funded?**
* A: Funding really not looked at in a ‘big way’. Rather, CalWARN is a network of water/wastewater utilities that meet monthly and look at ways to increase their resiliency. Funding for specific activities is discussed with steering committee members and ways are developed to implement. Partnerships with AWWA and other organizations that have a funding stream is very important. We have conducted CalWARN exercises within AWWA conferences.
* **Q: To Joe Crisologo: Who pays for CALWARN costs (web site etc.) if there are no fees?**
* A: It is a challenge. Currently, the CalWARN folks are in discussions with a County entity that receives UASI funding - the thought being that they could help fund the website. As the challenges present themselves, the steering committee looks into how to solve.
* A: *Further information provided by Ray Riordan of CalWARN*: Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) is the funding source that Bridget mentioned. CalWARN has tapped these funds for updating the website. There is no fee to participate in CalWARN. Reimbursement post disaster is written into the agreement and reimbursable via FEMA.
* **Q: To Bill Gilday: For NyWARN, how do you make sure the portable treatment/purification meet water quality standards? Our state (MO) was hesitant to use these and developed a specific guidance on these units, which discouraged purchase, I would like to help them reconsider.**
* A: Systems will often continue a BWO even with the portable treatment, though that need not necessarily be the case. All systems must continue their disinfection to meet CT if they want to lift a BWO with portable equipment. DE units have been accepted for SWTR for many years in NY, and we were able to get cartridge unit and UV substitutes from the vendor to allow our criteria to be met. We hope to develop some SOPs and criteria that would provide guidance as to when a BWO could be lifted with the portable equipment. In each case though, the decision would be subject to local health department approval.
* **Q: To Johnna McKenna: What was the biggest challenge to integrating water and wastewater utilities into the existing NH Public Works Mutual Aid Program? Was there much pushback to including private utilities?**
* A: No, there was no push back from the private utilities. We told the board we had to include them and the board was supportive. The biggest challenge was how to have the private utilities represented. Following a legal review, we determined the need to revise the state legislation to include them into the Program.
* **Q: To all speakers: Given the diverse sources of funding, are there other funding sources that you might consider or is the voluntary approach enough?**
* A: Ken Carter: FDEP can continue to use existing EPA grant funding for another 2 to 3 years. *(Note: New Federal funds have not been appropriated for this grant program since FY 10).* FlaWARN also receives support from Florida RWA. FDEP is in ongoing discussions with U.S. DHS for new funding. WARN members are not currently helping with the search for funds.
* **Q: To all speakers: How do you and your WARN partners help sustain the energy of the WARN program during the “quiet times”? Have you found ways to keep people enthused and supported?**
* A: Joe Crisologo: In CA, we look to regularly updating contact information, holding training and exercises and participating in conferences to sustain interest.

A: Kim Dyches: In UT, we also engage members through exercises and are currently planning a functional exercise where WARN is activated through tweets requesting information on available resources.

* **Q: To Johnna McKenna: Do you still have the circuit rider position active and what are they doing now?**
* A: No. The person is still involved in the program, but not under contract. Six months ago we discussed bringing that project back and using funds collected from the annual membership fee to pay for it. These fees can also be used to make trainings cheaper for attendees.

There being no further time, the webinar was ended.