



TXWARN

Official Newsletter for Members of the
Texas Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network

SUMMER 2011

Dispatch

Remember us?

As a TXWARN member, your organization is part of the largest utility-to-utility disaster response network in the nation.

But you may not know it. Since Hurricane Ike in 2008, Texas has been spared widespread disasters affecting water and wastewater utilities.

So you haven't really needed to remember TXWARN. *Thank goodness.*

With this newsletter, we want to bring you up-to-date on TXWARN and encourage you to log in to your account at www.txwarn.org.

As the hurricane season spins into its most historically intense time and as the drought strains utilities, take time to update your utility's profile and familiarize yourself with TXWARN.

You may never need TXWARN. But, if you do, it's good to be ready.

Aug. 24 teleconference tests utility readiness

Texas utilities can brush up against a major hurricane without getting wet as TXWARN and the Texas Section of the American Water Works Association present a tabletop exercise on utility readiness Aug. 24.

The teleconference will be available for viewing at 11 sites across the state. The six-hour event begins at 9 a.m. CDT.

Utility operators may be eligible for up to six hours of TCEQ continuing education credit. TCEQ's decision on the hours is pending.

Participants will have a front-row seat as utility officials cope with a scenario that has a major hurricane slamming into Corpus Christi, then flooding San Antonio and turning off the lights in North Texas.

"Operators and managers will be able to increase their preparedness in case the Big One comes knocking at their door," said TXWARN Administrator Mike Howe.

No matter where you are in Texas, you may call, text or e-mail your questions to the teleconference experts, so you'll have the information you need to make sound decisions and assure delivery of utility services to your customers in the event of an emergency.

Cost is only \$30/person for TXWARN members (\$45 for nonmembers) and includes a box lunch. To register for the teleconference, use the form on Page 3 or register on-line through www.txwarn.org.

How dry we are...

Worst drought in decades challenges utilities

Two types of disasters that TXWARN has faced — hurricanes and floods — are marked by too much water. With the 2011 drought, the problem is too little water.

At presstime, 99 percent of Texas was in drought, most of it the worst kind of drought. More than 600 utilities had implemented some form of water use restrictions to compensate for diminished supplies. The 75-year-old Lower Colorado River Authority announced flows into its Central Texas lakes had never been as low.

Weather forecasters predicted the dry spell would linger. TCEQ officials urged utilities to implement drought contingency plans, fearing that inaction now would deplete supplies later in the year.

TXWARN isn't just for hurricanes. It's for any event — natural or man-made — that interrupts a utility's service beyond its ability to repair. If your utility needs assistance because of the drought, contact TXWARN at www.txwarn.org or 866-9TXWARN.



Letter from TXWARN

By Mike Howe
TXWARN Administrator
Executive Director, Texas AWWA

The Hurricane Season of 2005 redefined the way utilities work together. That Hurricane Season, which included, most notoriously, Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and Hurricane Rita in Texas, forced utilities to re-evaluate their roles. In New Orleans, we saw that the failure to restore water and wastewater service affected every other recovery effort.

Without water, hospitals didn't cure diseases, they spread them. Without water, the Superdome turned into the world's largest – and most population-dense – outhouse. Without water to fight fires, buildings burned that shouldn't have.

After Katrina, water professionals such as yourselves realized that – as much as fire and police – utility workers are essential emergency personnel. They are the emergency personnel who are experts in getting water systems running again, which is essential to getting everything else working again.

It was that recognition that has spurred the development of WARN systems across the country.

After Katrina and then, Rita, we in Texas began to form the third WARN system in the nation. WARN systems are designed to take advantage of the fact that water personnel have unique training, education and experience that no one else has. They are the water and wastewater experts.

I have a great respect for emergency managers. They usually do a great job allocating personnel and resources. But emergency managers don't speak "Utility."

National Guardsmen can restore order, but they can't restore water service. They don't speak "Utility."

Firefighters, police officers, and EMTs are critical for the tasks they're trained to do, but very few of them know how to bring a drinking water plant back on-line or fix the main breaks in the distribution system. They don't speak "Utility."

Other utility systems DO speak "Utility" – fluently, if you'll excuse the pun.

WARN systems are utility-to-utility networks designed to allow utilities to prepare for a disaster before it happens and respond quickly when it does happen.

A utility that is damaged or disabled can request assistance and other WARN members can choose, as they are able, to provide that help as only professionals who speak "Utility" can do.

We found in Hurricane Rita that, when a whole region is

Speaking 'Utility'



affected, all the neighbor-to-neighbor alliances and agreements that were made didn't help. Everyone in the region was struggling.

Many utilities found that their staffs had been evacuated. Many workers were, rightly, concerned about the safety of their families and unavailable. The major player in the region – the City of Beaumont – had done a good job of preparing for the storm, but was absorbed in restoring its own system.

WARNs allow utilities to reach out to a larger body of experts who speak "Utility."

They can draw on a larger geographic area, beyond the affected zone, and draw on a more diverse set of utilities that may have special skills that wouldn't otherwise be available.

Most importantly, WARN systems give utilities a chance to prepare for large-scale disasters by identifying needs before the event. Using the power of the Internet before disaster strikes, WARN systems enable utilities to match needs and resources far beyond their traditional limitations.

After disaster strikes, if the Internet is not available, utilities can use whatever communication that is available – cell phones, PDAs, satellite phones – to request or offer assistance.

WARN response works within the framework of other emergency response – we work to train utility personnel in the Incident Command System protocol. In Texas, at one end of Tornado Alley and with almost as much coastline as Florida, we believe our TXWARN system is the future of utility emergency response and essential not only for the recovery of utilities, but for all facets of a community.

WARNs allow utilities to work directly with their peers – that extended family of experts that speaks "Utility."

How to ask for help

If your utility needs assistance:

- Log on to your account at www.txwarn.org.
 - On the left side of the page, under "Incidents," click "Request Assistance."
 - Choose whether you want to send the request to an individual member, to all TXWARN members in a TCEQ region, or to all members.
 - Fill in the "Subject" and "Message" Fields. Be as specific as possible. Identify equipment you need.
 - Click the "Send" button at the bottom of the page.
- Call TXWARN at 866-9TXWARN (866-989-9276).

Tutorial: www.txwarn.org/members/help.php

3 down, 15 to go if storm forecast holds

The Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico are going to be more dangerous this summer, forecasters predict.

The National Hurricane Center of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says its models show as many as 18 named storms – up from the usual 11 – with winds greater than 39 miles per hour.

Of those 18, as many as six could reach “major” status, with winds greater than 111 miles per hour.

At presstime, only three named storms had materialized: Arlene, Bret and Cindy, so activity is expected to pick up in August and September. The three systems did not threaten Texas. A high-pressure system that straddled the nation kept the storms at bay, but that could change late in the season.

2011 Atlantic Hurricane Names

Arlene	Lee
Bret	Maria
Cindy	Nate
Don	Ophelia
Emily	Philippe
Franklin	Rina
Gert	Sean
Harvey	Tammy
Irene	Vince
Jose	Whitney
Katia	

Sign me up for the TXWARN Tabletop Teleconference!

August 24: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. CDT • 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. MST

**REGISTRATION INCLUDES BOX LUNCH

SITES

Arlington: Arlington Water Utilities Service Center, 1100 SW Green Oaks Blvd.

Austin: Hornsby Bend Biosolids Mgmt. Plant, 2210 S. FM 973

Beaumont: Region 5 ESC, 2295 Delaware

Corpus Christi: Service Center, 2726 Holly, Building 8A

Fort Worth: TBA

Houston: Harris County Health Dept., 2223 West Loop South, Rm. 532

McAllen: McAllen Water Utilities, 2501 W. Expressway 83

Odessa/Midland: 119 E. 4th, Odessa

San Antonio: San Antonio River Authority, 100 E. Guenther St.

Waco: Riverside Service Center, 200 Colcord Ave., Building 200

Wichita Falls: Cypress Water Plant, 4801 Big Ed Neal Dr.

Name: _____

*Email (required for processing) _____

Title: _____

Organization _____

AWWA Membership No: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone No: _____ Fax No: _____

Registration Fee: \$30.00 Member \$45.00 Non-member

• **SITE YOU ARE ATTENDING:** _____

Bill my credit card AMEX MC VISA DISCOVER

Card Number _____ Exp. date _____

• CVS Code (3-digit code on back of MC/Visa; 4 digit on front of AMEX) _____

Name as it appears on card _____

Billing Address if Different _____

City/State/Zip _____

Signature _____

Enclosed is my check payable to “Texas Section AWWA.”
mail form and payment to:

Texas Section AWWA
c/o **Gilleland Creek Press**
P.O. Box 676
Pflugerville, TX 78691

REGISTER ON-LINE AT www.txwarn.org

OR FAX YOUR FORM TO 512-251-8152 TODAY!

You may fax your registration and mail the check (along with a copy of your registration form).
Payment must be received prior to the Teleconference.



TXWARN SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Texas Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network
P.O. Box 676
Pflugerville, TX 78691
www.txwarn.org

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Texas Municipal Utilities Association



Water Environment Association of Texas

Questions and Answers

about TXWARN

Q: What is TXWARN?

A: TXWARN is a utility-to-utility response network. If a utility's ability to provide service to its customers is interrupted beyond its ability to repair, it can contact the TXWARN membership for assistance.

Q: Does TXWARN have staff and equipment?

A: No. TXWARN is operated by volunteers and staff from some of the largest water associations in the state. Chairman of TXWARN is **Richard Talley** of the **Fort Worth Water Department**. While it does not have staff or equipment (i.e. generators) of its own, TXWARN does give utilities a way to contact other utilities who may have personnel or equipment that can assist.

Q: How does TXWARN work with other agencies?

A: TXWARN follows the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which is the standard for disaster response. TXWARN coordinates its efforts with the TCEQ and with the TEEEX Public Works Response Team working with the Governor's Division of Emergency Management. During an emergency, TXWARN will participate at the State Operations Center in Austin.

Q: Who's a member of TXWARN?

A: Any water or wastewater utility in Texas can join with a simple procedure at www.txwarn.org.

Q: How much does it cost to be a member?

A: It's free. We don't even sell T-shirts.

Q: How is TXWARN funded?

A: TXWARN is funded through a grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Q: Does my utility need to complete a Mutual Aid Agreement (MAA)?

A: Under law passed in 2007, public utilities are covered by a Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement. Under this automatic MAA for governmental entities, public utilities do not need to sign the TXWARN Mutual Aid Agreement. However, TXWARN encourages all to read the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement at www.txwarn.org to fully understand how the process works. The automatic MAA does not cover private or investor-owned utilities. When they become members, they should complete the TXWARN MAA.