

From the Executive Director - November 2008

Disasters can strike our communities at any time and without much warning. Police and emergency medical responses are key, of course, in the first few hours following a disaster. Rebuilding our communities after a disaster, however, takes more than squad cars and ambulances. It requires sound public services, starting with drinking water and wastewater treatment.

When disaster shuts down the water treatment plant or the sewage treatment plant, a community loses the ability to repair itself, so getting those plants back on-line is a top priority for local officials. In order to make disaster recovery easier, faster, and more effective, a group of dedicated local officials have created WisWARN — the Wisconsin Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network.

Water and wastewater agencies can use the WisWARN network to locate personnel, equipment, and materials in times of emergency. It provides rapid, short-term deployment of emergency services to recover from any emergency, including natural disasters like tornados, floods, ice storms, and earthquakes — or manmade disasters like hazardous spills, train wrecks, electrical outages, vandalism, riots, and terrorist attacks.

WisWARN does this by providing its members with emergency planning, response, and recovery information before, during and after an emergency. Since WisWARN is part of the nationwide WARN system, it also helps in conducting mutual aid with other states as needed.

The core of the WisWARN web site is its emergency equipment database that matches utility resources to a member's needs during an emergency. A member can locate pumps, generators, chlorinators, evacuators, and trained personnel in any emergency.

- The WisWARN program supplies its member agencies with:
- A standard omnibus mutual assistance agreement.
- A process for sharing emergency resources among members statewide.
- Resources to respond and recover more quickly from a disaster.
- A mutual assistance program consistent with other statewide mutual aid programs.
- A forum for developing and maintaining emergency contacts and relationships.
- New ideas from lessons learned in disasters.

There are two parts to the web site. The public side is open to anyone to view. It has basic information about WisWARN and how to join. The second side, the resource database, is only open to members who have signed the agreement, and it is free.

I encourage all League members to join WisWARN. You can get a membership application and other information on the web at www.wiswarn.org.

Don't wait until you see the funnel cloud.

Dan Thompson