

InWARN - Frequently Asked Questions

What is InWARN?

Indiana's Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network is the formalized system of "utilities helping utilities" deliver mutual aid following major emergencies. The project's infrastructure will consist of a network of public and private utilities, a steering committee, a Web-based communication system and a practical mutual aid agreement designed to reduce bureaucratic red tape in times of emergency. The goal of InWARN is to provide aid to member utilities during times of emergencies. The means will be to allocate utility personnel with the appropriate expertise, equipment and tools where needed to assess and assist the impacted water and wastewater systems in getting their systems operational as quickly as possible.

How did InWARN get started?

InWARN is modeled after existing networks in Florida (FlaWARN) and California (CalWARN) that have demonstrated that a network of "utilities helping utilities" is the best method for responding to the immediate water and wastewater damage caused by natural disasters. Most notably, FlaWARN helped utilities in Mississippi and Alabama after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

InWARN was launched on August 29, 2007, the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's landfall on the gulf coast. While it is very unlikely that utilities in Indiana will ever be damaged by a major hurricane like Katrina, the state's water and wastewater systems can and have been damaged by tornados, floods, ice storms and earthquakes. By proactively establishing partnerships and response plans, utilities and other associations are doing their part to protect the well-being of Hoosiers.

How does InWARN work during an emergency?

After a disaster, member utilities are able to request assistance through the InWARN Web site indicating the specific assistance needed. Member utilities can respond if they have the personnel and equipment to do so. Since power and communication systems are often damaged during major emergencies, InWARN administrators and steering committee members will need to collaborate with State Emergency Management officials to communicate with member utilities in the affected areas. Their needs will then be posted on the InWARN Web site.

This use of the Web site is innovative because it enables member utilities to match their available resources to requests for assistance. InWARN is designed to get the correct resources to the appropriate location within the first days after an event.

What is the Network organizational structure?

The Network is composed of public and private water and wastewater utilities that have joined the Network by signing the Mutual Aid Agreement.

A steering committee provides leadership for InWARN, meeting via phone or in-person conferences as needed. The committee is composed of representatives of:

- four state water/wastewater professional organizations, including Indiana Section American Water Works Association (AWWA), Indiana Rural Water Association (IRWA), Indiana Water Environment Association and the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water;
- two government agencies: Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS);
- one administering association, Indiana Association of Cities and Towns (IACT).

IACT is responsible for administering the program during its first year, developing and maintaining the network's Web site, processing the mutual aid agreements, managing the member database, and supporting other needs.

What organizations are involved in InWARN?

InWARN is made up of public and private water and wastewater utilities across Indiana, assisted by regulatory, technical and law enforcement agencies. The Network was created through the collaboration of water and wastewater utilities by and through the Indiana Section of the American Water Works Association, the Indiana Rural Water Association, the Indiana Water Environment Association and the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water, with the active participation and support of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns. The formation of the Network has also been supported by the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) and the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC).

How is InWARN funded?

Public and private water and wastewater utilities and members of the water and wastewater associations that have collaborated to create InWARN have volunteered their time to create the Network and man the steering committee. Funding for the creation of the InWARN Web site and for the first year of administration of the Network is being provided by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Why not just use the available mutual aid agreements already in place through the state EOC and FEMA?

During the hurricanes of 2004, utilities in Florida found it difficult to get the needed assistance without a formalized agreement for the responding utility to get reimbursed for their efforts. FlaWARN resolved this issue by offering member utilities a standardized mutual aid agreement outlining terms and conditions of reimbursement prior to requesting and receiving assistance. InWARN has modeled its program after this system.

How many states currently have emergency water/wastewater agency response networks?

Currently, Florida, California, Texas, Louisiana, Oregon, Georgia, South Carolina, Utah and Pennsylvania have water/wastewater agency response networks.

Who should I contact if my organization is interested in joining InWARN?

Utilities and associations interested in joining InWARN should contact Brandon Cockrum, IACT, at (317) 237-6200, extension 234, or bcockrum@citiesandtowns.org.

An InWARN Web site is also being developed through which utilities will be able to obtain information and join the Network. The Web address will be www.inwarn.org and is expected to be operational within a month or two.

What is required to join InWARN?

Indiana utilities and associations interested in joining InWARN should request a copy of the mutual aid agreement (MAA) for review. Membership is granted upon receipt of the signed MAA and the required emergency contact information.