



CoWARN Membership Helps Utilities Manage Emergencies

By Steve Frank, APR, WEF Fellow

It is 2013, and CoWARN is “together, viable, and healthy,” said Metro Wastewater Reclamation District’s Jay Allen at the group’s Annual Meeting hosted at Metro on November 1, 2012.

CoWARN stands for Colorado Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network. Membership is voluntary, free, and the organization is unfunded. As the name implies, both drinking water and wastewater utilities can be members.

Being a CoWARN member can be a huge help to a utility that lacks sufficient manpower and equipment resources it needs when facing an emergency. CoWARN is a big mutual aid network that lets member agencies borrow from other member agencies under pre-arranged conditions when an emergency has been declared.

“The WARN idea has made its way into mainstream emergency management,” said Karen Shanley of the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District and the chair of CoWARN. “It’s utilities helping utilities,” she added.

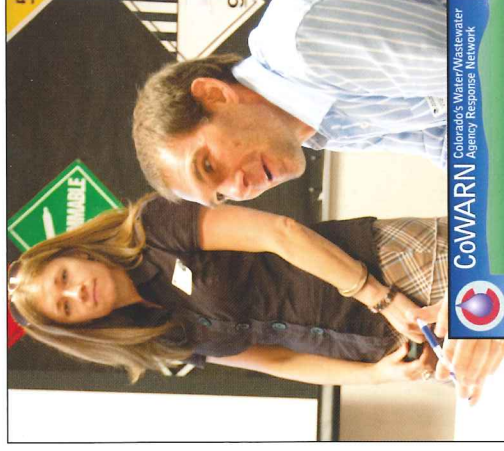
Both RMWEA and RMSAWWA back CoWARN.

At one point during the meeting, Allen recounted five Colorado utility emergencies in the past year for which the CoWARN system was activated. The emergencies all began on a Friday afternoon or a Saturday. CoWARN proved an invaluable resource in helping these utilities get through their emergencies.

Eight agencies were represented at the meeting in person and another three joined the discussion by phone. CoWARN has 63 members.

One of the highlights of the meeting was a briefing on the CoWARN website (www.COWARN.org) by David Dani, who works for CDPHE and oversaw putting the website together. “CoWARN is putting a number of documents and tools on the website,” Dani said. “One of the most useful website tools is the operations plan, which can be found under the news and events tab.”

“The ops plan helps you in an emergency,” said Metro’s Allen, the plan’s



David with CDPHE tells the CoWARN group about the CoWARN website. Karen Shanley (Eagle River Water and Sanitation District) moderated the meeting.

principal author. “We wrote it with ease of use in mind,” he said, acknowledging the help of Hope Dalton of Tri-County Health Department.

“One of the things I don’t understand is why some agencies won’t join,” Shanley said. “It’s a mystery.”

The WARN idea has grown from just three states in 2006 to 48 in 2012. If you have questions, call Shanley at 970.477.5424.



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