

# NYWARN: Mutual Aid Membership Available for Water and Wastewater Systems

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After years of discussion, meetings, concepts and ideas, a statewide mutual aid network for water and wastewater systems is now available. NYWARN (New York Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network) has officially started its tenure as a major tool for operators and systems in dealing with emergency response and recovery.

According to literature from the NYWARN Committee, “the purpose of a WARN is to provide a method whereby water/wastewater utilities that have sustained or anticipate damages from natural or human-caused incidents can provide and receive emergency aid and assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services as necessary from other water/wastewater utilities.” In New York, the network has been developed to provide rapid response to utilities in order to restore our most critical infrastructure needs, water and wastewater.

Now I know many of you have heard these promises before or are rather skeptical at this point. To that I add that the NYWARN membership is based on voluntary participation, and there is no direct cost to the system. By voluntary I mean that there is no obligation to respond when called upon. In the event your system is requested for assistance, and you are unable to provide the necessary materials or manpower, you simply decline the request, no questions asked. We are all very busy, trying to do the same or more with less, so instances will arise when you just can't provide assistance, and the NYWARN system understands that.

NYWARN also provides a Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement. This agreement was created by several legal minds to address the needs of most systems to save financial resources at the local level. In brief, the agreement provides provisions for network activation, reimbursement, liability, and any other issues as mutually agreed upon by its membership.

This mutual aid network is built on the concept of utilities helping utilities. To this end, systems requesting assistance are ensured to receive help from quality, certified operators' dedicated to the same responsibilities within their own community. I think this is crucial. Several qualified professionals working to achieve one common goal, restore a system to operation and compliance!

NYWARN was established by a dedicated group of industry professionals who comprise a steering committee, of which the NYRWA is included. All the steering committee members are from water and/or wastewater systems. This one concept furthers the mission that this is truly a system of utilities helping utilities. The committee members come from throughout the state, allowing the needs of each region to be brought forth and addressed as required. Regulatory agencies such as NYSDOH and NYSDEC have played a major role in the development of this network, but as interested parties, not as part of any governing body. Again, utilities helping utilities!!

A website has been established to provide an overview of the network and includes membership applications, the mutual aid and assistance agreement, a list of committee members with contact links, a current membership list, and some additional resources. The web link is [www.nywarn.org](http://www.nywarn.org).

In closing, I would like to stress that this network is not just for the large systems of our state. It was developed for ALL systems, to better address the needs of our consumers. The staff here at NYRWA fully support the NYWARN system and stand ready to assist you when the need arises. I encourage all of you to view the website and give serious consideration to becoming a member. A small amount of paperwork is a very small price to pay for the piece of mind in knowing that in the event of an emergency, resources and assistance are available. As always, if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at 1-888-697-8725 Ext 13 or email [Herman@nyruralwater.org](mailto:Herman@nyruralwater.org). 💧