

FlaWARN Partners

FlaWARN is made up of Water and Wastewater Utilities across Florida, assisted by regulatory and technical agencies. Currently, in addition to regional utilities, FlaWARN collaborates with:



Florida Department of Environmental Protection



Florida Rural Water Association



Florida Section American Water Works Association



Florida Division of Emergency Management



Florida Water Environment Association



Florida Water & Pollution Control Operators Association



SouthEast Desalting Association



Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc.



University of Florida Center for Training, Research and Education for Environmental Occupations

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FlaWARN Florida's Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network

www.FlaWARN.org



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What is FlaWARN?

Florida's Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (FlaWARN) is the formalized system of "utilities helping utilities" with mutual aid during emergency situations. The project's infrastructure consists of a secure web-based data bank of available resources and a practical mutual aid agreement designed to reduce bureaucratic red tape in times of emergency. The goal of FlaWARN is to provide immediate relief for member utilities during times of emergencies. The purpose is to get personnel with the necessary tools and equipment that can both assess and assist the impacted water and wastewater system as quickly as possible by whatever means necessary until such time that a permanent solution to the devastation may be implemented.

In responding to many natural disaster emergencies in 2005, FlaWARN 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. By combining a mutual aid network with a security information collaborative, FlaWARN has been able to cover all aspects of both natural and manmade emergency assistance.

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

During the hurricanes of 2004, utilities throughout the state 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.

How did FlaWARN get started?

Florida is vulnerable to a variety of natural and manmade hazards that threaten the safety and well being of our communities, businesses and the environment. When Hurricanes Charlie, Frances, Jeanne and Ivan impacted the state of Florida in the fall of 2004, it became very apparent that there was a need to expand the effort statewide. FlaWARN was borne shortly thereafter in April of 2005.

How is FlaWARN funded?

FDEP funds FlaWARN using a portion from their EPA Water Protection Grant.

What is the organizational structure?

A steering committee provides leadership for FlaWARN. It is composed of representatives of five state water/wastewater professional organizations including: AWWA, FWEA, FWPCOA, FRWA, SEDA; three at large members and a representative of FDEP. The University of Florida Center for Training, Research and Education for Environmental Occupations (UF/TREEO) is responsible for implementing the program.

How does FlaWARN work during an emergency?

When there is advance knowledge of an event, such as a hurricane, the steering committee starts pre-planning three to four days out. As the hurricane is tracked, utilities out of the path of the storm gear up to help the affected areas.

Member utilities are able to request assistance through the FlaWARN web site. Since electricity is often out during an emergency, FlaWARN administrators and steering committee members attempt to contact, using emergency contact information, all members in the area of the storm and determine their needs. Administrators may then post any needs to the web page. This is an innovative process because it allows member utilities to match their available resources to requests for assistance. FlaWARN is designed to get the correct resources to the appropriate location within the first days after an event.

FlaWARN is designed to gear up without any notice using the web page and personal contact to respond to any man-made emergencies or other disasters.

What is FlaWARN's history of responding?

FlaWARN responded to four major events in 2005. Starting with Hurricane Dennis in the Florida Panhandle in July and most recently Hurricane Wilma in October, FlaWARN has mobilized member utilities to respond with plant operators, mechanics, electrical technicians, generators, pumps, Vector-Jet trucks, and water distribution and wastewater collection system repair crews. Hurricane Katrina presented the greatest logistical challenge since sixteen FlaWARN member utilities responded to requests for assistance in the state of Mississippi. This effort was followed with five member utilities that were sent to Texas after Hurricane Rita.

Forty-five member utilities from Central and North Florida responded to the many affected areas of South Florida impacted by Hurricane Wilma. Over two hundred Florida industry professionals descended on affected areas to restore water and wastewater service. This is thought to be the largest water and wastewater mutual aid response to date in the United States.

What organizations are involved in FlaWARN?

FlaWARN is made up of Water and Wastewater Utilities across Florida, assisted by regulatory, technical, and law enforcement agencies. In addition to 156 member utilities, FlaWARN collaborates with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the University Of Florida TREEO Center, the Florida Rural Water Association, the State Emergency Response Team, the Florida Section of American Water Works Association, the Florida Water & Pollution Control Operations Association, the Florida Water Environment Association and the Southeast Desalting Association.

FlaWARN Benefits

The goal of FlaWARN is to provide services to member utilities and encourage more participation from utilities across the state.

FlaWARN assists its members with the following issues:

- ◆ Recovery coordination
- ◆ Resource inventory and availability status
- ◆ Information exchange
- ◆ Vulnerability assessment tools
- ◆ Preparation protocols
- ◆ Emergency Response Plan updates and checklists
- ◆ Updated best management practices reference library
- ◆ Up-to-date status reports
- ◆ Pertinent legislation briefings

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