

Common components of mutual aid agreements include:

- Language in the agreement that participation is strictly voluntary; however, with assurance that employees are willing to participate.
- Uniform procedures for notifying the participating systems, what resources can be used, and updating the agreement annually.
- A release of liability for participating systems and agreement that all equipment is provided “as is.”
- A method to account for the cost of resources used and reimbursement arrangements.
- A requirement that all participating systems are willing to comply with statutory requirements.
- An agreement to update inventory information between systems, including changes in supplies (for example, change in chemical product), equipment and personnel.
- A statement confirming that requests for aid take priority, so long as the lending system does not violate compliance standards and thereby jeopardize their facility.
- A hierarchy of needs in case the lending system is responding to more than one aid request.

Examples of Mutual Aid Plans

Rural Water Mutual Aid Agreement, pages 8-13 (National Rural Water Association) available at

www.ruralwater.org/emergency_network.pdf

Mutual Aid & Assistance Agreement, “Utilities Helping Utilities” (American Water Works Association) available at

www.awwa.org/Advocacy/Govt_aff/Documents/Sample_Mutual_Aid_Agreement.doc

Please look for more information about Mutual Aid from Ohio WARN on association websites and newsletters, including Ohio Section of American Water Works Association (AWWA) and Ohio EPA.

For more information, please contact Ohio EPA’s Division of Drinking and Ground Waters at (614) 644-2752 or visit our Security Web site:

www.epa.state.oh.us/ddagw/



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Mutual Aid Agreements

A Guide for Public Water Systems



Incorporating Mutual Aid, Community to Community



Division of Drinking and Ground Waters

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What is Mutual Aid?

Mutual aid is a mechanism for assisting nearby communities in rapid, short-term support in response to natural or man-made emergencies that threaten and/or cause damage to the critical operations of a particular service, such as providing safe drinking water. Support may be in the form of personnel, equipment, material and other associated services needed to restore critical operations.

When updating your emergency preparedness plan, remember these three key words: *anticipate, prepare and practice!*

ANTICIPATE the different forms of aid your system may require in the event of an emergency.

PREPARE and agree to a written mutual aid strategy with other systems in surrounding communities.

PRACTICE the aid strategy by conducting drills with the systems that have volunteered their assistance.

What is Ohio WARN?

Ohio Water Agency Response Network (OH WARN) is a committee of professional organizations, and municipal and private water systems working together to provide systems statewide with a standardized mutual aid assistance agreement and process for sharing emergency resources. See the back of this guide for more information.

Why should my system incorporate mutual aid?

A mutual aid agreement enhances a system's ability to quickly recover from an emergency event. Systems may already have a verbal agreement to provide skilled personnel, required materials and equipment to peers in surrounding communities. However, it is important that these agreements are written into emergency plans in order for each system to realize mutual aid benefits, such as

- **increased access** to critical resources during an emergency event;
- **quick** delivery of resources, such as chemical supplies, pipe and analytical services needed to return to normal operation;
- **solidarity** as professionals in the service of providing a safe, desirable and necessary resource to your communities;

- **reduced** administrative conflict because procedures for notification, response, and reimbursement are already in place;
- **reliability** that an agreement to volunteer aid exists and is updated when there is a change in employees and employers; and
- **increased assurance** for the public that their essential service will return more quickly.

What should be in the aid agreement?

Mutual aid agreements can vary from system to system and require some thought about community needs, logistics of the system, and legality of the agreement. One way to begin deciding what is important to your system is to review examples of existing aid agreements, such as those listed on the back of this guide.

