



# Virginia Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network (VAWARN) Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. If my utility signs the MAA, are we obligated to provide assistance?**

A. After signing the MAA, there is no obligation to provide assistance... ever!

**Q. My system is too small, what do I have to offer?**

A. Any assistance can be helpful to a system in need. Small systems may not have the equipment, but they have certified and knowledgeable personnel.

**Q. My system is too large. I will always be the one helping...who will be able to help me when I need it?**

A. It's not just about equipment but personnel too, including administrative and secretarial assistance especially if a pandemic hits your system. When a major emergency hits hard, a large system will need all they help they can get, even if it comes from several different smaller systems.

**Q. Why would my utility want to sign the MAA?**

A. Signing the MAA provides you:

- ▶ Access to assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, and supplies during your time of need, no matter what type of emergency;
- ▶ The possibility of receiving assistance quicker since the details are already outlined in the MAA;
- ▶ A blueprint of how the provision of food, shelter, and reimbursement will work, thus freeing up more of your time to work on the response.
- ▶ A network of other wastewater and water professionals;
- ▶ The ability to ask for help in an easy way.

**Q. What obligations does my utility incur by signing the MAA?**

A. If you sign the MAA, and choose to offer assistance during a specific emergency, then you are obligated to provide it under the terms and conditions of the MAA.

Or, if you sign the MAA, and initiate an emergency of your own, you are obligated to reimburse the assisting utilities according to the terms and conditions of the MAA.

**Q. How does a utility obtain assistance when they need it?**

A. There are two steps to obtaining assistance:

- ▶ The Member identifies the need and resources needed.
- ▶ The Member contacts another Member directly, or uses the VAWARN website to post their emergency/need to all members.

**Q. If my utility signs the MAA, who decides which of our resources will be offered?**

A. During each emergency, the responding utility decides which resources to offer for that specific emergency.

## **Virginia Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network (VAWARN) Frequently Asked Questions continued...**

### **Q. What happens when we need our resources back?**

A. Resources remain under the authority of the responding utility, and can be recalled at any time. Under no circumstances is a utility to send resources if it impacts their ability to manage daily operations or response to its own emergency.

### **Q. What happens if equipment on loan is damaged or stolen?**

A. The responding utility is responsible for insurance in case this happens.

### **Q. What are other benefits of participating in VAWARN?**

A. Here are a few benefits:

- ▶ The possibility of a reduction in lost water/wastewater revenue during emergency.
- ▶ Improved ability to respond to emergencies due to training, lessons learned, and experiences exchanged from other VAWARN Members.
- ▶ Participation can help a community satisfy the NIMS compliance criteria of participating in intrastate mutual aid agreements.

### **Q. Are VAWARN mutual aid and assistance activities eligible for FEMA reimbursement?**

A. FEMA-specific requirements related to VAWARN include:

- ▶ The MAA was in effect prior to the response/deployment to the incident;
- ▶ The assistance must be requested by the utility in need;
- ▶ The work performed, supplies used and materials consumed are directly related to the disaster and is otherwise eligible for FEMA assistance;
- ▶ Documentation of rates and payment for services can be provided.

Note: FEMA reimbursement may apply only after a Presidential declaration of emergency.

### **Q. How is VAWARN different from existing statewide mutual aid programs managed by emergency management?**

A. There are a few ways VAWARN emergencies differ from other programs:

- ▶ Statewide mutual aid/assistance agreements typically require a declaration of emergency by a local and/or state official to activate the agreement; the MAA does not require a declaration of an emergency, saving critical time in response to needs identified by the utility.
- ▶ Statewide programs typically do not include private utilities; VAWARN does.
- ▶ Statewide agreements are managed by the state emergency management agency; VAWARN is managed by utilities.

### **Q. How can I find out more information about VAWARN, including how to join?**

A. Additional information about the program can be found on the VAWARN website ([vawarn.org](http://vawarn.org)). There you will find program information, agreements, forms, and a list of participating members.

**To speak to someone directly, please contact:**

Geneva Hudgins

VA AWWA Executive Director

Phone: 434.386.3190

Email: [geneva.hudgins@vaawwa.org](mailto:geneva.hudgins@vaawwa.org)