

UPDATE

February 2008



Meetings & Events

*ORWA Annual Meeting
and Management
Conference
April 14-16, 2008
Meridian Convention
Center
Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma*

*Rural Water Rally
April 20-22, 2008
Hyatt Regency
Capitol Hill
Washington, DC*

*Operator Expo
May 5-7, 2008
Cherokee Casino
Tulsa, Oklahoma*

*ORWA Fall Management
Conference
September 10-12, 2008
Western Hills Lodge
Wagoner, Oklahoma*

*National Rural Water
Association Annual
Conference
October 5-8, 2008
Grand Sierra Resort
Reno, Nevada*



Welcome Back Donald

After a brief retirement (five months), Donald Spence has rejoined the ORWA staff. He will be resuming his previous position of Wastewater Technician and will be providing on-site technical assistance to rural and small community wastewater systems throughout Oklahoma. It's great to have Donald back on the ORWA team. He is well liked and respected everywhere for his knowledge, experience and troubleshooting abilities.

We would like to express our appreciation to everyone who applied for the Wastewater position. We had some great applicants.

Water Needs Survey

ORWA mailed a Water Needs Survey in November. The purpose of the survey is to identify issues of importance to our member water and wastewater systems. The information collected will help ensure that the views and concerns of rural water systems are considered in the development of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan. Surveys were mailed to the office and chairman of ORWA's 490 member systems. To date 129 completed surveys have been returned. Our thanks to all our members who have completed the survey. If your system has not completed the survey, please complete and return the survey as soon as possible.

Legislation

The Oklahoma Legislature convenes on February 4th. It looks like it will be a busy year at the Capitol. A total of 2,373 bills and resolutions have been introduced in the House and Senate. There are currently 75 bills, dealing with water and other issues of interest or importance to water and wastewater systems, on our bill tracking list. A summary of priority legislative bills is enclosed with this newsletter. Additional bill summaries are posted on the ORWA web site. Please call the ORWA office if you have questions or comments on bills.

1st Annual Operator Expo

Live Demonstrations

Operator Olympics

Try our new hands on Training!

May 5-7, 2008

Cherokee Casino - Tulsa, Oklahoma

Call us for more information or go to www.okruralwater.org



For emergency calls after office hours, nights, weekends and holidays, contact Gene Whatley at 405/794-0841



SoonerWARN: Utilities Helping Utilities in Times of Emergency

Oklahomans know all too well the results of Mother Nature's wrath. Whether it be floods, ice storms, tornadoes, or drought; water and wastewater utilities are often impacted by weather-related and other emergencies. While state and federal resources can help, these are often late in arriving. A neighbor lending a helping hand is often the fastest way to get help in an emergency. Using this idea of mutual assistance, Oklahoma's Water-Wastewater Agency Response Network, SoonerWARN, is a system of "utilities helping utilities" respond to and recover from natural or man made emergencies. Through SoonerWARN, drinking water or wastewater utilities are able to request and receive emergency aid and assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and associated services as needed from other water/wastewater utilities. The objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency services so that the critical operations of an effected utility are restored until permanent solutions can be implemented. SoonerWARN provides the network to establish and maintain emergency contacts as well as to streamline access to the specialized resources water and wastewater facilities need to recover from emergency disruptions. The backbone of the WARN concept is the Oklahoma Intrastate Mutual Aid Law for public utilities which outlines provisions for reimbursement, liability and other related issues. Privately owned utilities have the ability to sign a Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement which provides the same type of arrangements. SoonerWARN will significantly improve responses to incidences, providing better resilience for critical infrastructure both public and private, as well as enhanced preparedness.

Participation in SoonerWARN is voluntary, there is no obligation to respond, and there is no direct cost to become a member of the network. It is easy to join SoonerWARN. A membership application for SoonerWARN is available on

the network website at <http://www.soonerwarn.org>. SoonerWARN is designed to gear up without any advance notice using the web page and personal contact information to respond to natural or man made emergencies. Member utilities request assistance through the SoonerWARN web site. Since electricity can be unavailable during an emergency, utilities as needed can relay requests to a SoonerWARN Administrator through the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality's 24 hr. Hotline. When it is possible to have advance warning of an event, as with severe weather, member utilities will be alerted. As a disaster develops, utilities out of the path of impact can gear up to help the effected areas. Those unaffected water and wastewater facilities decide if assistance can be rendered and respond back through the webpage or, using contact information, directly to a requesting facility. This assistance fills the gap between the onset of an emergency and the arrival of government aid. The focus of SoonerWARN is to get the correct resources to the appropriate location within the first days after an event and is consistent with the National Incident Command System.

The SoonerWARN Steering Committee consists of representatives from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, Oklahoma Emergency Management Agency, Oklahoma Rural Water Association, Oklahoma Water Environment Association, Oklahoma Municipal League and the Oklahoma Association of Regional Councils of Government. The SoonerWARN website is also a source of, information on training and other resources. Utilities are encouraged to visit the website, <http://www.soonerwarn.org> to get see what SoonerWARN can provide for them and to apply for membership. For additional information on SoonerWARN, contact Monty Elder, DEQ, by phone at 405-702-9132 or monty.elder@deq.state.ok.us by e-mail.