

# West Virginia Rural Water Association

## **ATTENTION:**

### **ALL MEMBER SYSTEM BOARDS, COUNCILS, AND MAYORS**

West Virginia Rural Water Association (WVRWA) is proud to announce the formation of an Emergency Response Team (ERT) comprised of member system employees. Their mission will be to respond and assist systems in West Virginia in times of emergency.

Team members will be trained and equipped to operate equipment needed and equipment owned by WVRWA. Each Region will have a “Team Chief” and an “Assistant Team Chief” who will be notified when the Team is needed for an emergency. They will then assemble their Team and report to the site and check in for duty with the appropriate WVRWA personnel. There would be no limit as to the number of Team Members for each region, keeping in mind a diversity of skills would make this ERT even better.

Team members will be recognized for their work, dedication, and skills in WVRWA publications, at the Annual Conference, in media reports, and any other avenue available to WVRWA.

The main purpose of this Team is to promote quick responses, with the best and most qualified people, and to instill pride and self satisfaction in being a Team Member. This “team” will be made up of volunteer members from each of the six WVRWA regions of the State. Responses would be from the nearest ERT to the emergency. Should the emergency be large enough to impact several systems, ERT Members from additional Regions would be called up for assistance. This would continue until enough help was on scene.

How can member systems be a part of this revolutionary new effort? WVRWA is asking each member system to survey their employee base and consider dedicating or committing a specific number of employee(s) that could join this ERT, respond quickly, and be assured their paychecks would continue for a specified length of time.

We are aware that this might be a difficult decision for some systems, but please consider these facts:

#1 Consider the times we have employee resources available that may be redirected for an emergency situation, we routinely do this anyway. Just let an emergency happen and we automatically survey our resources to see what help we might be.

#2 Consider that most of us have full time employees who will be paid by our systems anyway, we would just lose their services in our systems for a specified portion of an emergency situation, thereby costing systems nothing additional.

#3 Consider the rarity of emergency situations that would require mobilization of this Team. This would only be used for true emergency situations, not assisting systems who routinely have “emergency situations” that can be dealt with by less than emergency responses. It has been several years since the last true emergency that required widespread responses.

#4 Consider the only ERT call up of your employees, most likely, would be if the emergency was in your Region, affecting systems near you, which you probably would assist anyway. Any wide spread ERT call up would involve a major disaster statewide which most of us would also assist in anyway.

#5 Consider ----- **it may be your system** that is in need of this ERT help due to floods, landslides, plant damage, terrorism, power outages, weather related emergency, pandemic flu, or any number of unforeseen circumstances.

As you can see, this would not only be a good neighbor gesture, it could well be described as an insurance policy for you as a Mayor, Board, Council Member, your system, and your customers.

Our desire is to obtain commitments of personnel and equipment from each system desiring to be a part of this Team, and have it **understood that systems will pay their employees** while on call up of this team. Other expenses such as food, lodging, and travel would be covered by WVRWA from an Emergency Response Fund during the emergency. Should recovery of wages paid by systems be available or become available from any agency (either in full or in part), wages paid by systems for those responding employees would be appropriately reimbursed to the systems providing Team Members.

Please do not count on this perfect world scenario, but know that payment could be possible. The whole purpose of this new E RT is to provide a quick response, regardless of who pays what, and prevent valuable time being wasted in an emergency trying to decide who and where payment will come from.

Several systems have already approved support of personnel and equipment for this ERT concept and many more are expected to sign on. Please give this your serious consideration, thought, and attention at your next meeting. We just don’t know when the ERT will be needed, we just know it will happen and our desire is to be up and running with this new Team when it does.

If you would like to participate, please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return to Debbie Britt at WVRWA, 100 Young Street, Scott Depot, WV 25560. Should you need additional information or would like a representative to meet and discuss this with you, please feel free to contact the WVRWA office at 1-800-339-4513 or Darrell Wellman at

304-525-3771. We would be very happy to explain this plan and answer any questions you may have.

Remember, if nothing ever happens then we don't need the plan or the ERT. How many of us believe nothing will ever happen???? To be safe, let's be ready!!

Sincerely,

Darrell Wellman, Chairman  
Emergency Response Committee  
West Virginia Rural Water Association