

West Virginia Rural Water Association Emergency Response Team is Called to Action!

Top Notch!

By Jack McIntosh, EPA Training Specialist

Once again, the rains came and caused devastation to Southern WV on May 9, 2009. The aftermath left the Town of Gilbert with creek crossings washed out, numerous line breaks, exposed distribution lines, water plant damage and overwhelmed, worn out personnel. With one quick phone call to Debbie Britt, West Virginia Rural Water Association (WVRWA) Executive Director, the WV Rural Water Emergency Response Team was rapidly assembled and headed for action.

Darrell Wellman, General Manager of Lavalette PSD and also WVRWA Emergency Response Committee Chairman and WVRWA Board Treasurer was eager to do what Rural Water does best, "Assist with rapid recovery involving disasters". Within hours, Darrell was equipped with his troops, Rich Smith, Field Supervisor; Randy Smith, Asst. Field Supervisor and Rob Weaver, Construction Supervisor along with service trucks, trash pumps, a backhoe, cutting and welding equipment, generators, chop saws, and the WVRWA Emergency Response Trailer. Wellman said, "Most of the work we accomplished in Gilbert is the very same things we do daily in our own systems. The big difference is that most of us do not have this much damage dumped on us at one time without the manpower and resources to repair it. We are very fortunate to have WVRWA and our Emergency Response Teams to assist in these emergencies."

Two counties away, Mike McNulty, General Manager of Putnam PSD had quickly assembled his troops, John Inghram, Supt. of Water Quality; David Mercer, Supt. Of Project Development; James Evers, Billing Supervisor; Chad Bowles, Foreman; Richie Handley, Utility Technician; Les Adkins, Utility Technician; and John Thaxton, Utility Technician along with an excavator, utility trucks, chop saws, trash pumps and other equipment to aid in the disaster relief.

Together, this *Dynamic Duo* of PSDs 12 water experts teamed together as one and made the necessary repairs to restore service and plant operations within 2 days. They also covered lines the flooding had exposed and reburying them to prevent further breaks. "When one member of the West Virginia Rural Water Association family is in trouble, it affects all of us. We are happy to do whatever we can to help," McNulty said.

"I am proud to say that the West Virginia Emergency Response Team was very effective in working with the towns affected by this flooding and that we were able to send resources to the areas that were effected," Britt said. "We are continuing to grow our Emergency Response Team and are confident that we can help systems out in dealing with whatever disaster occurs next."

Emergency Response Committee Chairman Wellman further stated, “I hope other systems that have the ability and resources to assist in times like these will sign on to our WVRWA Emergency Response Team and further reinforce the effectiveness of our efforts to help. Can you imagine the result if no one was willing to help your town or system when a disaster strikes??”