

Ice storms, tornadoes and floods: responding to emergencies

As 2007 is fast ending, I reflect on the year of events that affected many people across the state. Because I love the work I do and the fact that KRWA is out there helping water and wastewater systems, I know most people appreciate the regular work that KRWA provides. In this article, I'd like to share the response KRWA made when emergencies struck in 2007.

Winter storms, tornadoes, floods

Kansas was struck with disaster of one sort or another in 100 of the state's 105 counties in 2006 and 2007. When an emergency happens, KRWA's routine changes and responding to the systems in need is top priority. The year began with a devastating

snow and ice storm across a wide swath of western Kansas. The storm hit hard and left many utilities without power to their water supplies. With high winds, ice and three or more feet of snow, main power transmission lines

toppled. Bulldozers were required to get to some locations. KRWA staff spent hours on the phones and then locating generators, and going to these systems to pitch in.

In early May, tornadoes struck the state in several areas. KRWA staff checked with systems to see what their needs were. Greensburg was the hardest hit area; once we got clearance to be there, various KRWA staff spent about four

weeks helping the city protect their system, and then helping to restore the water and wastewater utility services.

No sooner was the focus off of Greensburg than heavy rains began falling in the southeastern

were on boil water notices. KRWA staff made numerous visits to systems and calls to others, checking on their needs. KRWA staff spent many hours in the area helping these communities restore water and wastewater facilities.

The disasters and emergencies in Kansas during 2007 again demonstrated a need for a coordinated effort to respond to emergencies for water and wastewater utilities.

part of the state, resulting in the severe flooding of many communities. Water treatment plants at Fredonia, Altoona and Coffeyville were impacted. Numerous rural water districts

Teamwork is key

Even though there were staff members carrying out special help in the disaster communities, anyone who called for other help received it. KRWA was able to



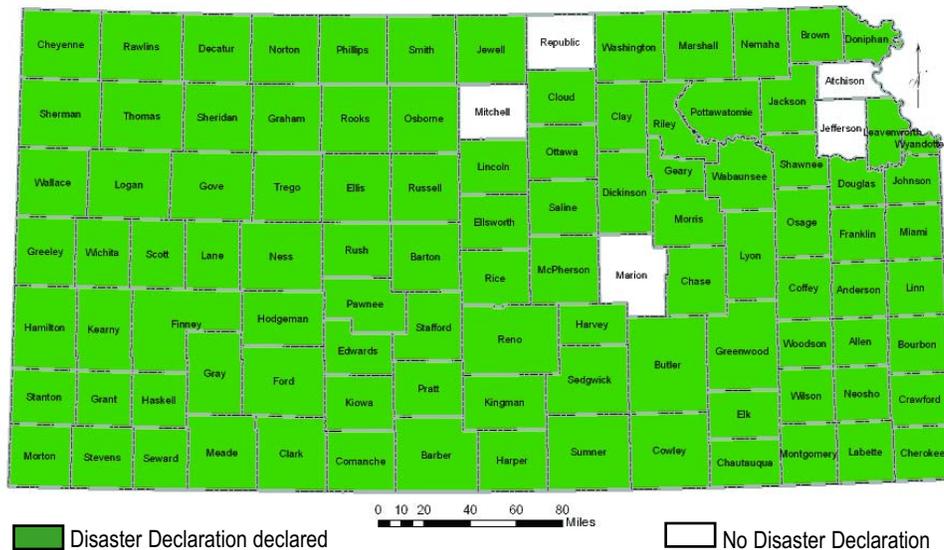
*Jim Jackson
Tech Assistant*



Tanker trucks wait in line in downtown Fredonia to pump water into the city's distribution system. The water was being pumped by tractor PTO into fire hydrants around town. The water was being provided by neighboring water systems "Neighbor helping Neighbor." Approximately 3 million gallons were hauled from Public Wholesale District 4 near Cherryvale with lesser amounts from the City of Howard.

keep up with requests from systems during emergencies by working as a team. That team included staff from the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment and mutual aid communities. Teamwork is a word that fits the utility industry very well. There were times during these emergencies that KRWA called on members for assistance, and every time the members were there to help. If more manpower was needed, it arrived. If equipment and parts were needed, it arrived. Rather than debate who would pay for it, KRWA just purchased what was needed. Calls to agencies and contractors and suppliers were coordinated and completed day and night, weekday and weekend.

Kansas Adjutant General's Office: Declared Disasters 2006, 2007



The disasters and emergencies in Kansas during 2007 again demonstrated a need for a coordinated effort to respond to emergencies for water and wastewater utilities. Kansas' communities

have always had a strong 'neighbor helping neighbor' attitude.

KRWA has been working on an emergency response network and mutual aid agreement for more than a year. KRWA and



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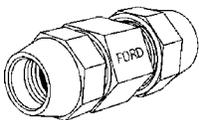
Ice storms, tornadoes . . .

Kansas Municipal Utilities are developing a Kansas Mutual Aid Program. Other stakeholder organizations will be invited to meetings to provide input into the program. KMU and KRWA will be meeting with KDHE and the Kansas Dept. of Emergency Management in mid-October as this issue goes to print. It's the intent of KRWA and KMU to involve all organizations and agencies that have a role in providing utilities to the people of Kansas. The goal is that the next time there is an emergency there'll be a more coordinated effort to respond with water and wastewater system people being first responders.

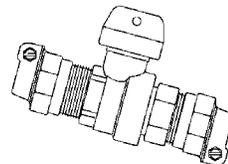
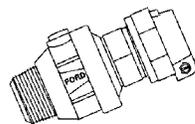
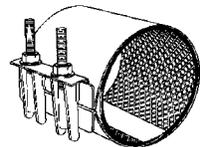
The Kansas Lifeline readers and Association members will be reading and hearing a lot more about the new mutual aid program in the coming months. I hope your city and RWD will participate in meetings to learn about it. Watch for this topic in future training sessions and certainly at the 2008 Annual Conference in Wichita, March 25 – 27.



KRWA consultant Pat McCool stretches to point to the height the flood waters reached at the Fredonia Water Treatment Plant. The building shown houses the water lab, office, and raw water pumps, all of which were submerged under approximately 10 feet of flood water.



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