

KRWA to establish emergency response network: KWERN

When your water or wastewater system has an emergency and you don't have the necessary repair parts, what do you do?

My recollection of a break on an 8-inch pipeline when I was the operator of a large rural water district stands out. The leak was draining the tower and the high service pumps couldn't keep up. The distribution system was valved off to isolate the leak and maintain positive pressure in the distribution system. This was the only water line supplying water to the distribution system. And it was about 10 p.m. on a Friday night. So the repair needed to be expedited to restore full service before the tower level dropped and the system would have customers without

service. The repair crew quickly worked to find the problem; an eight-to-four reduced fitting had blown apart. It was nearly midnight and we didn't have the needed part in stock. Who did I call? I called my neighboring water systems. Carl Chalfant, with the city of McLouth, got the first call at midnight asking if he had the much-needed part. He didn't have it so we both started calling other neighboring systems. The part was located, the repair was made and the system was back in service before the distribution system lost pressure.

"It is good to know that I can call on my neighbors and there is

no hesitation to help me out, and for them to know the favor will be returned," Chalfant said recently. Carl and I visited about how neighbors can help other neighbors. There were many times

systems helping each other creates a feeling of security."

This summer I attended a National Rural Water Association training session that discussed lessons learned from two of last

In viewing widespread disaster areas like these (Katrina and Rita) one frequent question is nearly always asked, "Is it possible to prepare for such disasters?"

I would get a part from Carl and later have the supplier drop off the new replacement at Carl's shop. Carl would do the same. Helping neighbors is part of life in the rural area. Carl summed up our conversation by saying, "Small

year's hurricanes, Katrina and Rita. In viewing widespread disaster areas like these one frequent question is nearly always asked, "Is it possible to prepare for such disasters?" Basic utility restorations of water, sewer,



Jim Jackson
Source Water Tech

Photos courtesy of Hoisington City Administrator Allen Dinkel



Most everything above ground and especially electric utility poles in the tornado's path on the north side of Hoisington took a beating during the F4 tornado that struck town during the spring evening of April 21, 2001.



Left: A crew from Larned repairs antennae on the elevated water storage tank to restore communications to emergency workers in Hoisington. Note the new "curve" in the ladder behind the worker on the tank catwalk.

Below: Debris removal started immediately as a third of Hoisington was destroyed by the tornado.



electrical and communications will speed up the entire rescue and reconstruction process. The cornerstones of timely restorations of service involve having an Emergency Water Supply Plan (EWSP) and a contingency plan.

In all the Kansas EWSP or Emergency Readiness Plans (ERP) that KRWA has helped develop or update, the plan list always includes the neighboring utility systems as a source of repair parts and fittings. In the

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Above: Hoisington home owners, family members and neighbors tackle the mountains of debris after the storm.



Above right: A group of Kansas Army National Guardsmen take a lunch break at the Salvation Army snack wagon.

State of Kansas, all public water systems must develop an ERP in compliance with K.A.R. 28-15-18. But when the disaster is widespread such as with the

hurricanes in 2005, who do you call? It's probably not appropriate to wait on FEMA.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Rita the Texas Rural Water

Association (TRWA) Board of Directors established the Rural Water Emergency Assistance Cooperative (RWEAC). The RWEAC is designed to provide assistance to small and rural water or wastewater utilities sustaining physical damage from natural or man made disasters or other

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emergency situations. TRWA Executive Director Tom Duck reports that, "RWEAC was created in recognition of the fact that rural utilities are often the last to receive vital state and federal assistance in times and circumstances of an emergency as demonstrated during Hurricane Rita."

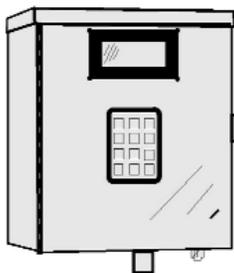
Kansas Rural Water Association has taken notes from Texas Rural Water Association and has begun to develop and establish the Kansas Water/Wastewater Emergency Response Network (KWERN). KWERN will focus on providing emergency assistance to small and rural water/wastewater systems to help them obtain assistance in the form of parts and material, equipment, and personnel. In achieving organizational goals, KRWA and KWERN will be able to quickly respond to affected system needs and assist small and rural systems in an area-wide disaster by pooling resources during the emergency.

KWERN benefits for systems:

- No membership fee
- Voluntary participation
- Network of personnel, supplies, and equipment available to systems in the event of an emergency or disaster
- On-site technical assistance to help with emergency or disaster
- No obligation that a member system respond

Kansas Rural Water Association will continue to work on the development and establishment of KWERN and hope that it never needs to be utilized. But all members of the Association will have a feeling of security knowing that neighbors helping neighbors, utility helping utility will be there for them.

If you are interested in learning more, please send an e-mail note to me at jim@krwa.net or call for me through the KRWA office at 785/336-3760.



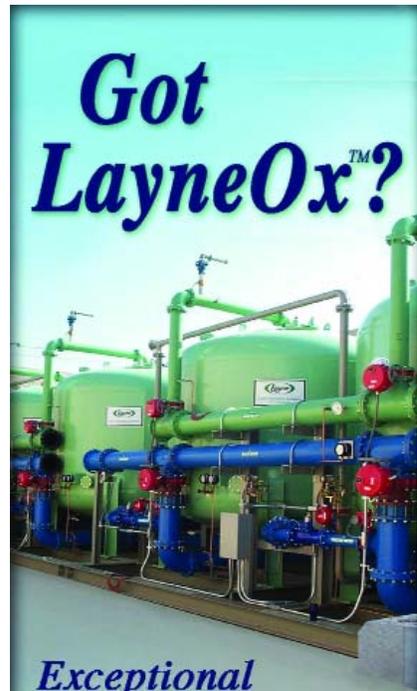
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