



## Legislation Text

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**File #: 0252-2008, Version: 1**

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### **Background:**

Events such as 9/11, the Blackout of 2003 and Hurricane Katrina identified a need for water and wastewater utilities to create intrastate mutual aid and assistance programs to effectively and efficiently provide peer-to-peer assistance during emergency response and recovery. Water utilities in the State of Ohio have recognized that emergencies may overwhelm them and thereby limit their ability to provide services to their customers. Consequently, assistance may be needed from outside the area of impact. Ohio Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (OH WARN) was created to address this need. The program is available to all public and private water and wastewater utilities in the State. As a member, participation is strictly voluntary. Each request for assistance is handled on a case-by-case basis and the member must determine whether it is willing and able to respond. The Department of Public Utilities, through its Director, is requesting authorization to enter into an Agreement to become a member of OH WARN.

The threat of both natural and man-made disasters is ever present. Therefore, the Department of Public Utilities needs to be prepared to respond and continue operations during an emergency. Joining OH WARN is a part of that preparation effort. Benefits include access to specialized resources, access to resources outside the area impacted by the emergency, quick access to utility-trained personnel, pre-established documentation protocols for federal reimbursement and building relationships before disaster strikes.

Participation in the OH WARN program is strictly voluntary and there is no cost to participate. However, if the Department of Public Utilities responds to a request for assistance through OH WARN, the Division will be reimbursed by the requesting member per the agreement. In addition, if the Department of Public Utilities requests assistance from another member(s), the Division will be obligated to reimburse the responding member(s) per the Agreement. It is very likely that in the event of such an emergency, the Division will be reimbursed for its efforts and those of responding members through federal funds. The net cost of receiving assistance during an emergency should be zero.

The financial impact cannot be calculated because when or if emergency response and recovery might be needed cannot be determined. Given the operating budgets and reserves of the department any effect on future water or sewer rates should be minimal.

Legislation is needed to enter into an agreement with Ohio Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network. The length of the agreement will be indefinite or until such time the Department of Public Utilities withdraws from participation in the Agreement.

OH WARN is a non-profit organization and does not require a City of Columbus contract compliance number.

To authorized the Director of Public Utilities to enter into contract with the Ohio Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (OH WARN) to allow intrastate mutual aid and assistance programs to effectively and efficiently provide peer-to-peer assistance during emergency response and recovery.

WHEREAS, There is a need for water and wastewater utilities to create intrastate mutual aid and assistance programs to effectively and efficiently provide peer-to-peer assistance during emergency response and recovery, and

WHEREAS, OH WARN was created to address this need and is available to all public and private water and wastewater utilities in the State, and

WHEREAS, OH WARN includes access to specialized resources, access to resources outside the area impacted by the emergency,

quick access to utility-trained personnel, pre-established documentation protocols for federal reimbursement and building relationships before disaster strikes, and

WHEREAS, Participation in the OH WARN program is strictly voluntary and there is no cost to participate. If the Department of Public Utilities responds to a request for assistance through OH WARN, the Division will be reimbursed by the requesting member per the agreement. In addition, if the Department of Public Utilities requests assistance from another member(s), the Division will be obligated to reimburse the responding member(s) per the Agreement. It is anticipated that in the event of such an emergency, the Division will be reimbursed for its efforts and those of responding members through federal funds. The net cost of receiving assistance during an emergency should be zero, now, therefore

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

Section1. That the Director of Public Utilities is hereby authorized to enter into contract with the Ohio Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network to allow intrastate mutual aid and assistance programs to effectively and efficiently provide peer-to-peer assistance during emergency response and recovery.

Section 2. That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.