

# Annual ORWARN Conference Focuses on Practical Preparedness

Apr 29, 2016 at 8:48 AM



In late February 2016, more than 70 utility members attended a two-day conference in Newport, Oregon.

Sponsored by the [Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network](#) (ORWARN), the conference brought together national, regional, state, and local experts to converse about steps employees can take - both at home and on the job - to prepare for a major emergency. The conference also focused on preparing utility



members to participate in the multistate [Cascadia Rising Exercise](#) in June 2016.

More than 20 speakers were on hand to discuss all aspects of resilience for both people and utilities. Mary Ellen Collentine and Chris Wanner, both current ORWARN board members, focused on how emergencies can transcend jurisdictional boundaries and why effective coordination is essential in preserving lives and property. During their presentations, they explained how the ORWARN network of member utilities can help to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency services, in the form of personnel, equipment and materials, required to restore critical operations to utilities that have sustained damages from natural or man-made events.

The Portland Water Bureau is a strong supporter of attending trainings and building partnerships that help to transcend jurisdictional boundaries. We understand that effective coordination is essential in preserving lives and property before, during, and after emergency incidents.

**“WARNs became established to provide rapid deployment of mutual aid to a utility to help restore critical operations,” notes Mary Ellen. “Water and wastewater staff are certified by their states to operate their utility and only similarly skilled staff from other utilities have the training and experience to step in to help. This is why it is so important to participate in mutual aid.”**

The last day of the conference included a table top exercise sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



