

Disasters Don't Plan Ahead. WEROC Does.

By Kelly Hubbard



In 2017, the Water Emergency Response Organization of Orange County (WEROC) provided trainings, exercises, and disaster response to our member agencies in order to ensure that Orange County residents will have a safe and reliable drinking water source, even when the unexpected happens.

This year, WEROC received funding to purchase eight fuel trailers. During a disaster, Portable Fuel Trailers will supply fuel to critical infrastructure sites operating by generator. The trailers were delivered to El Toro Water District, Irvine Water

District, East Orange County Water District, South Coast Water District, Yorba Linda Water District, Moulton Niguel Water District, the City of Huntington Beach and the City of Westminster.

Additionally, WEROC received funds to purchase three Emergency Water Quality Sample Training Kits (EWQSTKs). WEROC began the process of facilitating an 18 month training and exercise program focused on responding to an Unknown Water Contamination Event. The trainings included instruction on the use of water sampling kits, water quality notifications, and determination of a credible threat. A full-scale multi-agency field and functional exercise is being planned for 2018.

In order to ensure an effective response during a disaster, WEROC also began the process of updating and strengthening our Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs). A site assessment of our EOC was conducted to evaluate for seismic stability, and the ability of each facility to continue to operate following an earthquake. WEROC is currently working through the recommended actions to determine feasibility and costs for the suggested modifications.

Finally, WEROC supported member agency response to spring 2017 Winter Storms and the Canyon Fires. The most significant being the Canyon 2 Fire that began in the City of Anaheim from October 9-12. The fire burned 9,217 acres with 25 structures destroyed and 55 structures damaged. WEROC identified critical water infrastructure in the path of the fire and requested structure protection and emergency escorts to agencies impacted by the fires. This action kept water flowing to thousands of residents. WEROC also provided mutual aide to various water and government agencies affected by the Sonoma, Napa, and Ventura fires.

Next year, WEROC will conduct our unknown contamination exercise, build up our EOCs, implement a new and reliable radio communications system, update our Emergency Operations Plan and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and be ready if a disaster comes our way.