

# 2014 Nationwide Mutual Assistance Drill

*In early 2014, the American Gas Association (AGA) and U.S. regional gas associations (Southern Gas Association, Midwest Energy Association, Northeast Gas Association and Western Energy Institute) conducted a National Mutual Assistance Drill simulating a natural disaster scenario that tested the effectiveness of existing mutual assistance programs among natural gas associations and further enhanced the emergency response efforts of North America's natural gas utilities.*

## Supporting DOE's Recommendation

Following 2012's Hurricane Sandy, the U.S. Department of Energy recommended that the oil and gas sector "establish mutual-assistance relationships with the owners and operators of critical energy infrastructure before an event occurs. These relationships and networks should be established during steady-state operations to facilitate communication when an event occurs."

## AGA's Mutual Assistance Program

Established in 2006, AGA's Mutual Assistance Program is a voluntary program designed to assist gas distribution utilities following a man-made or natural disaster that requires response, recovery and restoration resources beyond the capability of the company and regional mutual aid programs. The national program is intended to supplement local, state and regional assistance programs where the responding company and company in need of aid are not already covered by an alternate agreement.

## The 2014 National Mutual Assistance Drill: A Timeline

AGA, Southern Gas Association (SGA), Midwest Energy Association, Northeast Gas Association, and the Western Energy Institute collaborated to plan and conduct the 2014 National Mutual Assistance Drill. Three AGA/SGA member companies – Atmos Energy, Entergy and CenterPoint Entergy – played the role of impacted companies in need of aid due to a "Hurricane Alpha" that causes outages and damage to their systems.

<b>Friday, Jan. 17</b>	SGA contacts the Mutual Aid Contact Database via email to notify participants that "Hurricane Alpha" is approaching the U.S. Gulf Coast of Mexico.
<b>Tuesday, Jan. 21</b>	SGA sends the first notice of damage to the Mutual Aid Contact Database, including the Request for Assistance (RFA) form and instructions to request and offer assistance. Throughout the day, two more notices are sent with completed RFAs from impacted companies. Participants hold a conference call to discuss damage, RFAs and offers of assistance.
<b>Wednesday, Jan. 22</b>	More offers of assistance pour in. Participants participate in conference calls to obtain updates.
<b>Thursday, Jan. 23</b>	Scenario finishes. Participants hold a closing conference call to debrief and discuss lessons learned.

## Results

**293** utility and pipeline companies and their subsidiaries as well as **69** contractors and consultants received drill notifications and RFAs. Within 24 hours, **58** companies and **5** contractors submitted **64** offers of assistance, offering a total of more than **2,400** personnel. The companies requesting assistance finished reviewing the offers of assistance by January 23 – within 48 hours after issuing RFAs. They accepted the assistance of **1,015** personnel from **24** different companies. Based on participant feedback from a survey conducted, AGA and regional gas associations will improve procedures including notification, request and assistance forms, communications and more.

## Going Forward

The natural gas associations and their member companies will continue to review and refine their mutual assistance programs and protocols. This will help ensure that America's natural gas utilities are able to respond quickly and provide resources to companies needing aid, thereby enhancing the resiliency of natural gas systems and infrastructure. AGA envisions that the Nationwide Mutual Assistance Drill will become an annual exercise for its membership and that it will complement the industry's emergency planning portfolio. Natural gas utilities operate a robust and resilient delivery network, and AGA and its members are committed to continually enhancing the safe and reliable delivery of natural gas to homes and businesses throughout the nation.

## To Learn More

Visit <http://www.aga.org/mutualassistance> or contact Mike Bellman at [mbellman@aga.org](mailto:mbellman@aga.org) or 202-824-9181.