



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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For immediate release August 31, 2012

Hurricane Isaac remnants could affect Chicago region

MWRD encourages water conservation in advance of weekend rain

Hurricane Isaac has dropped significant rain throughout the southern Gulf coast over the last few days, and as the storm path continues to work its way north, there exists the possibility of weekend rain in Chicagoland.

In order to reserve capacity in the local intercepting sewer systems, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) encourages the public to pay special attention to water usage leading up to and during this and all storms.

Most of the region has a combined sewer system, which means the same pipes carry wastewater and stormwater to MWRD's treatment facilities. When the system becomes overwhelmed, whether from sewage or rain water, flooding may result. This is why it is important that the underground pipes remain as empty as possible before rains fall.

"The MWRD is building the Deep Tunnel system and reservoirs to capture excess water and flow from combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and hold the flow until it all can be fully treated at MWRD water reclamation plants," explained Commissioner Debra Shore. "We also need citizens to join us in keeping the tunnels and reservoirs as empty as possible to make room for the excess flow."

There are specific actions that can be taken before a storm hits that will help limit the amount of water and sewage in the system. In the hours leading up to and during the storm, it is recommended that residents postpone running the dishwasher or doing the laundry, bathing, showering, watering the lawn or washing the car.

The Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) is one of the largest civil engineering projects ever undertaken, and although it is still under construction, the TARP tunnels has been very effective since going online in 2006. Since then, the average number of days with CSOs has gone down from 100 to 50 per year, and an estimated 85 percent of the CSO pollution from TARP's service area is captured and treated. The current system has yielded millions of dollars in flood damage reduction benefits.

"When the entire TARP system is online, the area will reap tremendous benefits and even greater protection," said Commissioner Shore.

More information about TARP can be found at: www.mwrdd.org.

To reduce the number of CSOs during rain events, the MWRD recommends that residents refrain from the following activities in the hours leading up to and during a storm:

- running the dishwasher
- doing the laundry
- bathing or showering
- watering the lawn
- washing the car

***Our water environment,
take it personally***

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrdd.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.