



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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More than 250 pounds of drugs diverted from the drain and into MWRD's collection to improve area water quality



(L-R) Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) staff members Elle Bradley and Bettina Gregor helped contribute medications to the MWRD's collection to ensure proper disposal and help protect the environment.

In less than two days, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) collected 257 pounds of drugs for safe disposal as part of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) National Drug Take Back Day.

The event, held at three of the MWRD's water reclamation plants (WRP) and headquarters downtown, provided a safe, convenient and responsible means for disposing prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications and potential harm to the environment.

Between April 29 and 30, the Stickney WRP in Cicero collected 139.4 pounds of medicine, while the O'Brien WRP in Skokie

amassed 88.8 pounds and the Calumet WRP on the far South Side took in four pounds. In addition, the MWRD's Main Office Building, at 100 E. Erie St., collected 25 pounds.

Drugs are often mistakenly deposited in toilets and drains and are destined for local waterways. Water treatment facilities are not designed to remove minute concentrations of pharmaceuticals, and the chemicals could eventually wind up in area streams and waterways and have a negative impact on water quality. Numerous studies show significant negative effects that pharmaceuticals have on aquatic life.

"It's important not to dispose of medications down the drain because they end up in the water supply. Controlling what goes down the drain is the easiest and most effective way to protect our environment," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "We are pleased to partner with the DEA on this important event. By collecting these drugs, we are offering various environmental benefits to our personal health and our water resources."

To prevent or reduce accidental contamination of streams, rivers and lakes, the MWRD has worked with the DEA Chicago Field Division to participate in the initiative each year since the event was launched in 2010. This latest collection eclipses the last Drug Take Back Day in September 2015, when the MWRD collected 237 pounds of unwanted pharmaceuticals.

There are many ways to reduce the amount of pharmaceuticals before they reach treatment facilities and/or the waterways. The first is to complete the course of treatment as prescribed by the physician. For over-the-counter products, a supply should be monitored and stored in one location at home to prevent the purchase of additional or extras. Homeowners are encouraged never to pour the pharmaceuticals down the toilet or drain or give or sell them to others. For those with unwanted medicine unable to participate in the Drug Take Back Day, there are various police stations and municipalities across Cook County that allow medicine to be deposited throughout the year. The city of Chicago collects unwanted medicines 24 hours per day, seven days per week at its police facilities as well. For a complete list, visit www.mwrdd.org and click on "Unwanted Medicine."

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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.