



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD's Industrial Waste Division patrols the flow to protect the water environment

Staff in the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD's) Industrial Waste Division (IWD) Field Surveillance section work day and night to protect the public's health and the water environment.

Several of these workers were recently commended by MWRD officials following their swift actions during three events over the past year that shed light on the importance of their work and the need for public education and awareness on what not to pour down drains.

Most recently, Pollution Control Technician Marlon Siler was sampling water flowing into the MWRD's intercepting sewer en route to the Kirie Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) in Des Plaines for treatment when he noticed the water color changing to purple. Working with Environmental Specialists Kristine Wienberg and Derek Domain, they were able to track down the origins of the contaminant within 40 minutes and prepared the MWRD's Maintenance and Operations Department to treat and clean the water before it could be discharged into Higgins Creek with the other 52 million gallons of water that enter the plant on average each day for treatment.

It turns out that a company had been purging old ink instead of having it hauled off-site for proper disposal. Dumping contaminated fluids down drains is sometimes used to cut corners and other times, there is a misunderstanding in which company employees are not trained sufficiently. The ink dumper was ordered to cease and desist operations and was cited with a declaration of corrections. As a result, the company will be more closely monitored in the future.

The second event occurred this spring, when a small single engine airplane crashed on the Hanover Park (HP) Fisher



(L to R): MWRD Pollution Control Technician Marlon Siler, Environmental Specialist Kristine Wienberg, Senior Environmental Specialist George Olson, Environmental Specialist Solomon Gurmu and Environmental Specialist Derek Domain work to protect the water environment by closely monitoring what goes down the drain before reaching the Kirie Water Reclamation Plant in Des Plaines.

Field property. Derek Domain, whose service territory includes the Schaumburg Regional Airport, responded immediately to mitigate the potential disaster of leaded aviation jet fuel spilling into the West Branch of the DuPage River. Luckily, the field tiles on the property of HPWRP direct flows to the head of the plant, where the contaminated water could be treated and cleaned.

A year earlier, Environmental Specialist Kristine Wienberg and Environmental Specialist Solomon Gurmu reported a hazardous materials incident at a Streamwood food processing plant from which seven people were taken to the hospital after a 90-pound ammonia leak threatened lives and the water environment. Throughout the 90-degree day, Wienberg and Gurmu monitored manholes for flows while the firefighters flushed the interior of the facility and the sewer system. They stayed on site for hours to assist firefighters on how to effectively drain the ammonia and water to prevent polluting the water and contaminating the separate sewer system that serves local residents. *(continued)*

MWRD's Industrial Waste Division patrols the flow *(cont.)*



Pollution Control Technician Candace Bays services an automatic sampler and collects wastewater samples from an industrial user located in the Kirie WRP's drainage basin.

“There are too many stories to count in which our Monitoring and Research Department and Industrial Waste Division are put on the front lines at all hours of the day and night to ensure we have clean water passing through our systems,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Thank you to our staff for their tireless work and our industrial users and those residents at home who are cautious about what they are pouring down their drains.”

Pesticides, herbicides, microplastics, road salt, disposable wipes, unwanted medicine, fertilizers, contact lenses, and dental floss are typical household items that should be carefully separated from the wastewater stream. However, IWD also has to pay close attention to significant industrial users so that the flow entering the treatment plants is not heavily polluted. When it does occur, pollution control technicians



Pollution Control Technician Dawon Mitchell tests water samples.

and environmental specialists have to quickly act. The IWD has 622 Large Industrial Users (LIUs), of which 339 are Significant Industrial Users (SIUs) discharging an average of 25,000 gallons of process water a day or discharging regulated wastewater of any amount. The Northwest IWD office at Kirie WRP is alone responsible for 143 LIUs including 93 SIUs. Each of the SIUs are monitored by industrial inspections and analytical sampling of their wastewater discharge to ensure compliance to the MWRD's Sewage and Waste Control Ordinance.

“Whether it's industrial users, residents handling contaminants at home, or urban runoff during heavy rains, we stress vigilance when it comes to our drains,” said MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele. “Working together, we can protect our waterways and our water environment.”

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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