



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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For immediate release

February 23, 2021

MWRD prepares for snowmelt; advises residents to conserve water

Warmer weather coupled with ice and snowmelt means extra water overwhelming Chicagoland.

Because the frozen ground cannot absorb water and snow, runoff flows to the sewers. In addition, ice can block storm drains and streams. Flooding may occur when the sewer system becomes overwhelmed from the combination of normal sewage flow, rainwater and snowmelt.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is preparing for the additional flow. To help minimize flooding, the MWRD has lowered water levels in the Chicago Area Waterway System to make room for runoff, and our Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) system is ready to hold more than 14 billion gallons of water.

“The MWRD is prepared for our anticipated rapid snowmelt with plenty of space in our tunnels and reservoirs,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “There is potential for flooding when the ground is frozen and a lot of snow, ice and icicles melt at the same time. Please help us prepare for the rapid snowmelt by using less water at home to make sure there’s space in our local sewer lines for the water and melted snow to get to the MWRD, instead of unwanted places.”

The public can help minimize flooding by reducing water use, especially on days with rainfall. Postponing

high water consumption activities such as bathing or showering, running dishwashers or washing clothes will help provide maximum capacity in the local and intercepting sewer systems.

There are some other activities that can help minimize flooding:

- Make sure storm drains are clear and not buried under snow drifts.
- Keep areas around streams free of floatable debris.
- If your home has a backwater valve installed on the sewer, follow the manufacturer’s instructions for cleaning to ensure that it is functioning properly.
- Check your sump pump to make sure it is working properly.
- If your home or area is prone to flooding you may want to remove valuable items from basement floors.
- When spring returns, consider implementing green infrastructure practices at home by disconnecting downspouts to the sewer, installing an MWRD rain barrel or investing in permeable pavement or rain gardens.

If you see flooding, report it to your municipality; in Chicago, call 311.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at mwr.org.