



# Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

## Press Release

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## **MWRD, community representatives work to eliminate flooded basements, sanitary sewer overflows into area streams**

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and its community partners are working together to reduce basement back-ups and sanitary sewer overflows.

Even before the Illinois General Assembly granted the MWRD stormwater authority for Cook County in 2004, the agency has been working to address problems associated with weakening sewer systems in separated sewer communities. These communities have one pipe designated for stormwater and another pipe for sewage; rather than combined sewers in which both flow into one pipe. The predominant factors contributing to flooding in separated sewer communities is infiltration and inflow of stormwater into the sanitary sewers, overwhelming the sewer and causing "back-ups."

Infiltration pertains to groundwater entering a sanitary sewer system through defective pipes, pipe joints, pipe connections and manhole walls as well as illegally connected perforated pipes, drain tiles and under-drains. Inflow refers to stormwater entering sanitary sewer systems through illegally connected roof downspouts, yard and area drains, footing/foundation drains, cooling-water discharges, drains from springs and swampy areas, leaking manhole frames and covers, and cross connections of storm and sanitary sewers. However, disconnecting these illegal connections can be expensive.

Because minimizing infiltration and inflow is key to efficient sewage conveyance in both the public arena and in private dwellings, corrective work in both realms is necessary. To help better understand how to assist communities with separate sanitary sewer systems, the MWRD convened an Advisory Technical Panel to seek input for the creation of a new monitoring program. The panel completed its work in July, and the results were conveyed to the MWRD Board of Commissioners in a special session held last month.

The goal of MWRD's Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation Program is to prevent both infiltration and inflow in the public realm and in private homes. From November 2011 through July 2012, MWRD staff, local public works officials and engineers met to discuss ways in which problems could be addressed in light of new federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) permitting requirements, a tool used to enforce the Clean Water Act by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants into waters of the United States.

"Having the Advisory Technical Panel is a great starting point for the Board to consider where we need to go from here," said Commissioner Debra Shore, chairman of the Board's

Stormwater Management committee. "We appreciate all of the time the community representatives have taken to engage in thoughtful discussion with our engineers."

While local governments are challenged to maximize funding opportunities to prevent stormwater from entering sanitary sewers in the public right-of-way, individual homeowners face similar challenges. To eliminate sources of stormwater from entering sanitary sewers in private dwellings requires the disconnection of downspouts, foundation sump pumps, and driveway drain improvements on private property.

The MWRD Board will take the panel's report under advisement as it works to devise reasonable solutions while educating homeowners and local leaders about ways to reduce the infiltration and inflow problem.

More information about efforts to reduce flooding can be found at [www.mwrdd.org](http://www.mwrdd.org).

### **Members of the panel included:**

Allan Berkner, Sewer System Evaluations, Inc.  
Christopher J. Breakey, S. Lyons Township Sanitary Dist.  
Craig Brunner, Donohue & Associates, Inc.  
Sean Dorsey, Village of Mount Prospect  
Ross Dring, Kimberly Heights Sanitary Dist.  
Mark Emory, Christopher B. Burke Engineering  
James Goumas, Hancock Engineering  
Alan J. Hollenbeck, RJN Group  
Troy Ishler, City of Oak Forest  
Paul Kendzior, Village of Northbrook  
Christopher King, Robinson Engineering  
Patrick McAneney, Village of Glenwood  
Bill Meyer, Village of Oak Lawn  
Jay Patel, Illinois EPA  
Janet Pellegrini, US EPA Region V  
Michael D. Piraino, PirTano Construction Company, Inc.  
Joseph Pisano, Village of Hillside  
Ed Santen, Village of Indian Head Park  
Steve Saunders, Village of Winnetka  
Dale Schepers, Village of Tinley Park  
Michael A. Smyth, Illinois American Water Company  
Mark Toll, Elk Grove Township, Daniel Creaney Company  
Fred Vogt, City of Rolling Meadows  
David Weakley, City of Palos Hills  
John Wiemhoff, US EPA Region V