



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Act of heroism by MWRD staff prevents potential drowning in Chicago River

During a routine patrol aboard a Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) pontoon boat along the Chicago River on August 15, MWRD staff members Karl Von Heimburg, an engineering technician, and Rudy Payne, a maintenance laborer, came upon a person in the water struggling to climb up a seawall.

A Chicago Police Department (CPD) officer was already on the scene and positioned on top of the seawall. The officer shouted to Von Heimburg and Payne for assistance in rescuing the gentleman, and without hesitation, the pair lifted the man out of the water and brought him safely onto their boat.

A CPD patrol boat arrived soon

thereafter and transported the man to the hospital for observation. He was later released.

For their heroism, the MWRD Board of Commissioners honored Von Heimburg and Payne with resolutions during today's Board of Commissioners meeting. "Rudy and Karl are a credit to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District," said Commissioner Frank Avila. "Their dedication to their profession and to their fellow citizens is exemplary. We are all proud to have such committed individuals on staff and appreciate their bravery and heroism."

"I think we did what anyone in our situation would have done," said Von Heimburg. "I was just doing my job trying to help somebody out," said Payne.

Prior to the rescue, Von Heimburg and Payne were aboard one of two MWRD pontoons which routinely search for debris that could impede waterway traffic. The pontoons travel along the Chicago Area Waterways (CAWS) protecting the waterways from floatable debris such as garbage, leaves, branches, or other items of varying sizes.



Commissioner Frank Avila, center, presents resolutions to Karl Von Heimburg, at left, and Rudy Payne in honor of their bravery for rescuing an individual struggling to climb out of the Chicago Area Waterways on August 15.

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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.