



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer
312.751.6633
public.affairs@mwr.org
100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Collection of unwanted drugs leads to cleaner waterways

Working with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) collected 237 pounds of unwanted pharmaceuticals that are often mistakenly deposited in toilets and drains and destined for local waterways.

In conjunction with the DEA Chicago Field Division, the MWRD hosted the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Sept. 25-26, at its Main Office Building and three water reclamation plants (WRP) across the Chicago area.

The Stickney WRP in Cicero collected 84 pounds of medicine, while the O'Brien WRP in Skokie amassed 71 pounds and the Calumet WRP on the far South Side took in 53 pounds. In addition, the MWRD's Main Office Building, at 100 E. Erie St., collected 29 pounds on Sept. 25.

"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. This initiative offers a safe, convenient and responsible way to dispose of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications and harm to the environment."

To prevent or reduce accidental contamination of streams, rivers and lakes, the MWRD has participated in the DEA's initiative each year since the event was launched in 2010. The drug collection is an environmentally responsible and secure way to dispose of medications. Water treatment facilities are not designed to remove minute concentrations of pharmaceuticals and as a result, the chemicals could wind up in area streams and waterways and potentially have a negative impact on water quality.

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, various police



Staff with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) show a small portion of the unwanted medicine that was collected to ensure it did not end up in local waterways. Pharmaceuticals poured down drains can impact MWRD treatment plants as well as fish, plant-life, groundwater and waterways.

stations and municipalities across Cook County allow medicine to be deposited throughout the year. The city of Chicago collects unwanted medicines 24 hour per day, seven days per week at its police facilities as well. For a complete list, visit www.mwr.org and click on "Unwanted Medicine."

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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.