



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD update on weekend storm

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has been working around the clock to provide flood protection for Cook County following Saturday's record rain fall. Approximately 4.34 inches of rain fell across the region this weekend and up to 5.65 inches in some areas.

The MWRD monitors the weather, and prior to major storms like we experienced this weekend, we draw down the waterways. Our goal is to provide maximum capacity in the area waterways and Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) system to provide as much protection from flooding as possible. When the Chicago area waterway levels are higher than Lake Michigan and predetermined elevations are reached, the MWRD opens control structures to move as much water as possible out of the system. This provides overbank flooding protection as well as more capacity for stormwater.

On Saturday at 1:47 p.m., the MWRD opened the control gates at the Chicago River Controlling Works (CRCW) and Wilmette Harbor during the severe rain event. The reversal ended at 9:02 a.m. Sunday. The TARP system, which is comprised of 109 miles of tunnel and two reservoirs, is operating as designed. Of the four TARP tunnel systems, holding a combined 2.3 billion gallons of water, the Mainstream and Des Plaines Systems are full holding 1.6 billion gallons, serving Chicago and 36 suburban communities. The Kirie TARP system, covering Arlington Heights, Des Plaines and Mount Prospect, is currently storing 206 million gallons. There is an additional 2.3 billion gallons stored in the Calumet TARP system, filling only 27 percent of the system due to the magnitude of Thornton Composite Reservoir, which holds 7.9 billion gallons alone in addition to 630 million gallons in the Calumet tunnel system. The Calumet TARP system serves the far south side of Chicago and 13 south suburban communities.

We operate seven water treatment plants throughout the region, which clean a combined flow of over three billion gallons a day. When it rains, we maximize the flow to our plants to ensure we are moving the maximum amount of water through our system. We are pumping all of the water from the TARP system to our plants for full treatment.

This was the first reversal of the North Shore Channel at Wilmette since April and the first reversal along the Chicago River at CRCW since July 2016.

According to the National Weather Service, Saturday was the wettest October day on record, and the wettest calendar day since July 23, 2011.

We encourage the public to minimize their use of water before and during storm events to reduce the amount of water flowing into the sewer system. This will provide maximum capacity for combined stormwater flows.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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