



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Media Advisory

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Open House Chicago tours at MWRD's O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant spur education and insight on water environment



Guests of all ages flocked to the settling tanks at the MWRD's O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant to learn how water flowing down their drains is eventually cleaned and returned to the environment.

Like the millions of gallons of water that stream into the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD's) O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) in Skokie each day, a steady flow of nearly 900 visitors funneled into the WRP to receive a valuable lesson in how the MWRD works to protect their water environment.

Visitors had the opportunity to bask in the rich history and unique facilities of the O'Brien WRP showcased during the Chicago Architecture Center's Eighth Annual Open House Chicago (OHC). This was the MWRD's first experience participating in the OHC festivities and the city-wide event proved beneficial to the many curious minds who visited the WRP to gain insight into how their water is reclaimed through the innovative and resourceful processes at O'Brien WRP.

"We were happy to participate in Open House Chicago to spotlight this industrious water reclamation plant and engage with the many neighbors it serves," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "Our facilities not only represent distinguished architecture, but also serve as high-functioning spaces that work around the clock to protect our water environment."

Visitors to O'Brien WRP were given a behind-the-scenes look into the critical operations that transform wastewater into the clean water that has sparked recreational demand along the



MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos and Commissioner Kari K. Steele welcome almost 900 guests to Open House Chicago at the O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant in Skokie where nearly 500 million gallons per day can be cleaned during heavy rains on the Far North Side of Chicago and surrounding north suburbs.



(L-R): MWRD Treatment Plant Operator III Sandra Matual; Senior Human Resources Analyst Barb Miller; Commissioner Debra Shore; Maintenance Laborer James Healy; Public Affairs Specialist Rebecca Wooley; and Administrative Specialist Katie Egan-Cichon at the Open House Chicago tours of the O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant.

North Shore Channel and Chicago River. Tour goers visited a range of facilities at the WRP, such as the Pump and Blower Building, which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places, and the more modern ultraviolet (UV) disinfection facility built in 2016 to kill off pathogens in water using 896 UV light bulbs. (continued)

Open House Chicago tours at MWRD's O'Brien WRP, *cont.*



Visitors were treated to an introduction from plant engineers and a video before a guided walking tour throughout the O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant. The MWRD also hosted family-friendly activities under a welcome tent and offered guests an opportunity to meet staff and learn about operations and research.



“We were delighted to see so many people visit the O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant as part of Open House Chicago,” said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. “It’s a reminder that the work we do at MWRD is interesting -- even fascinating -- to the people we serve, and that our facilities are not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing and architecturally important.”

Placed into service in 1928 as the North Side Sewage Treatment Works, the O'Brien WRP today serves more than 1.3 million people residing in a 143-square-mile area that includes Chicago, north of Fullerton Avenue and the 17 suburbs in northern Cook County that extend to Lake County on the north, Lake Michigan on the east and Harlem Avenue and Des Plaines River on the west. The plant cleans an average of 230 million gallons of wastewater per day (mgd) and has the capacity to treat 450 mgd.

The O'Brien WRP is one of 250 spaces and places participating in the OHC in Chicago and near suburbs. The OHC is part

of a worldwide movement of free open house events that began in London in 1992. Today more than 40 cities worldwide hold similar weekend festivals.

“Thank you to the Chicago Architecture Center for creating this outstanding forum of education and outreach for the many communities we serve and the interested minds who are passionate about improving their water environment,” said MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele. “Being able to educate local residents is essential to garnering greater understanding of the importance of wastewater management and meeting our mission.”

For those who could not participate at the OHC event, the MWRD offers tours of its WRP and other facilities throughout the year. For more information, please contact the MWRD Office of Public Affairs at (312) 751-6633 or email public.affairs@mwrld.org.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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