



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## MWRD drug collection takes pharmaceuticals off the street, protects local water environment

More than 150 pounds of unwanted medicine was collected in a mere four hours by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to prevent pollution in the waterways and educate the region about safe disposal of pharmaceuticals.

In conjunction with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Chicago Field Division, the MWRD accepted unused or expired medication for safe disposal on Oct. 27 at three water reclamation plants (WRPs). Both of the semiannual drug collections yielded a total collection of 263.9 pounds for 2018.

“Drugs that enter our water stream can negatively affect aquatic life and the water quality we strive to protect,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Thank you to the DEA for their partnership on this program and the many contributors who are taking drugs off the street, out of landfills and out of our water environment.”

The event aimed to provide a safe, convenient and responsible means for disposing 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 U.S. DEA’s initiative each year since the event was launched in 2010. In addition to National Drug Take Back Day, the MWRD offers drug collection boxes throughout the year. The MWRD drug boxes have collected more than 330 pounds in 2018 from the four sites.

Water treatment plants and septic systems are not designed to deal with pharmaceutical waste. As a result, many pharmaceuticals pass through the system and are released into streams, lakes and ground water.

“Prescription and over-the-counter medications can be harmful to the waterways,” said MWRD Commissioner Frank Avila. “National Drug Take Back Day reinforces our commitment to protect our water and collect drugs throughout the year. We encourage the public never to flush unwanted medicine down toilets and drains but rather to use an MWRD collection site, or check with a local pharmacy to see if it accepts unused or expired medications for disposal.”



*MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos and a constituent stopped by the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant on October 27 to deposit unwanted medications.*

The MWRD entered into an agreement in 2016 with the Cook County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) to expand the CCSO’s Prescription Drug Take-Back Program by providing funds to purchase and install drug collection receptacles throughout the county for better public access. Thanks to this partnership, 7887.50 pounds of unwanted medications have been collected in Cook County.



*A partially filled box of unwanted medications.*

MWRD collection boxes are available year round seven days per week from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the three WRPs and Monday through Friday at the MWRD Main Office Building, at 100 E. Erie St., Chicago. For more information, visit [www.mwr.org](http://www.mwr.org) or dispose drugs at MWRD facilities located at the following locations:

- Calumet Water Reclamation Plant, 400 E. 130th St., Chicago
- Stickney Water Reclamation Plant, 6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero
- O’Brien Water Reclamation Plant, 3500 Howard St., Skokie
- Main Office Building, 100 E. Erie St., Chicago

**Recovering Resources, Transforming Water**

*Established in 1889, the MWRD ([www.mwr.org](http://www.mwr.org)) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.*