

Protecting Our Water Environment

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FOR IMMEDIATE

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Stormwater Control / Racine Pump House
Status Update

CHICAGO - As citizens of Cook County enjoy one on the most beautiful stretches of summer weather, they can also relax in knowing that the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (District) has its stormwater management system skewed to taking care of whatever may come its way.

After the Racine Avenue Pumping Station (RAPS) at 3838 South Racine lost power and 14 massive pumps went out of service during the violent storm of August 4th, the District configured its standard operating plan to divert RAPS flow into the Deep Tunnel, which is currently empty. The Deep Tunnel can contain 1.9 billion gallons of water. Gates along the system are adjusted so that all runoff would defer to handling the 26 square mile area served by RAPS. The District also has modestly lowered the level of the area's 76 miles of canals and waterways to also handle additional flow.

With this operating system in place, questions regarding the restoration of the pumps and capacity to handle potential rain are truly less important in terms of managing a weather event. To that end, the District has two pumps back in working order. The third is expected to be on-line around midnight tonight. The colossal 22,000 pound pump motors have been systematically dismantled and transported to a drying facility in Hobart, Indiana. At that location, they are refurbished, and pre-tested before being transported back to RAPS for installation. The District is hopeful eight pumps will be back in service by the end of next week.

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“Eight pumps of this size are well capable to consider RAPS as returned to normal”, said General Superintendent Richard Lanyon. “We are taking this as an opportunity to examine and meticulously overhaul this very powerful equipment. Our trades people and engineers are successfully and relentlessly working to protect the public, and the future integrity of this pumping station.”

In 1987 a different situation occurred at the District’s North Branch Pumping Station, but configurations along the same lines were used to control the waterways and storm water run off with no adverse effect on property or public safety. Also with this system set-up, the county's 22 other pumping stations, and seven treatment plants are not under particular strain.

Terrence J. O’Brien, President of the Board of Commissioners said, “The District is a well tuned, water management agency providing consistent, quality service to all taxpayers and municipalities by continuously upgrading that service within a fiscally responsible budget. The quality of our engineers and mechanics and the vision of our management has dramatically improved our capability to handle flooding events across the county. We will continue to do so.”

The District has been in continuous contact with Chicago Water Management Department and working cooperatively with the city’s Office of Emergency Management keeping the public and various city agencies aware of the restoration progress. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has also been kept up-to-date.

The District is the 119 year old autonomous government agency responsible for storm water and wastewater management, in an 883 square mile area, including Chicago and 125 suburban municipalities. It monitors and sustains 76 miles of navigable waterways and 1,300 miles of small streams. Per day, its seven facilities clean an average flow of 1.4 billion gallons of wastewater. Its service population is the combined equivalent of ten million residents and industrial users. For additional information: www.mwrdd.org.

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