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MEDIA RELEASE

April 17, 2025

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MSD historic flooding in April

LOUISVILLE, KY – More than seven inches of rain in only five days early this month produced the eighth highest flood level in recorded Louisville history. The Ohio River crested April 9 at 36.63 feet on the upper gauge, three times the normal pool height of twelve feet. The deluge taxed all three utility services MSD provides in one agency, making for a very busy time across the flood protection, wastewater treatment, and stormwater drainage areas.

The sanitary system reached capacity, leading us to ask customers to temporarily refrain from using washing machines and other heavy water consumption activities until the system could catch up.

Years of planning and infrastructure investment paid off in preventing the flooding from being much worse than it otherwise might have been. Days before the first raindrop fell, the drainage and flood protection teams went into action based on the wet forecast. Known trouble spots were inspected and cleared of debris that could clog catch basins.

And a team of 36 assigned flood pump operators and 10 alternates were put on standby for the order to trade their regular MSD duties for running the pumps that pull water from overflowing creeks and send it into the river.

MSD Executive Director Tony Parrott states, “In total, more than 170 MSD employees work shifts to protect our city 24/7 and contribute to flood protection activities during severe rain events. These individuals are true guardians of our city.”

Paddy's Run Flood Pump Station was the first pumping station put into service when it was activated on April 4 at 11:52 a.m. Two days later, all sixteen stations were in service after the 17th Street facility was activated at 3:45 p.m. on April 6. Station operators managed the pumping of more than 12.1 billion gallons of stormwater.

MSD Flood Protection Operations Director Dane Anderson said constant preparation is what leads to a successful response. “There’s continued preparation daily for these events,” Anderson said. “We plan year-round.”

Since the devastating 1997 flood in Louisville, MSD has built infrastructure that has nearly a billion gallons of stormwater and combined overflow storage to our system. That likely saved many more homes from flooding during this event, according to Chief Operations Officer Brian Bingham.

“If we hadn’t built those, there would have been much more flooding,” Bingham said. “This was a major win for the community, although I know it’s not going to feel like that to those who were impacted. We are very proud of what we have done and how we have used the community’s resources.”

Combined sewer overflow basins, such as the four-mile-long Waterway Protection Tunnel, capture overflows and hold it until the wastewater treatment system regains capacity while stormwater basins mitigate stream flooding. MSD Chief Engineer David Johnson said the basin system played a significant role in damage prevention during this event.

Now that the flood waters have receded, the entire flood protection system will be inspected, and repairs will be made as needed. That will help MSD be prepared for the next big flood.

Flood Facts and Figures

- ☐ Flood level in recorded Louisville history
 - 8th highest Upper gauge crested at 36.63 feet on April 9
 - 11th highest Lower gauge crested at 68.02 feet
- ☐ 4 percent annual chance of a flood event this size
- ☐ 16 Flood Pump Stations actively pumped over 12.1 billion gallons
- ☐ 65 of 150 floodgates went into service
- ☐ 7 movable (vehicle) service closures placed: 10th street, 27th Street, 2nd Street, Bingham Way, Riverport, 11th Street, 8th Street
- ☐ Levee and floodwall inspections were conducted every shift

About MSD

The Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) works to achieve and maintain clean, environmentally safe waterways for a healthy and vibrant community. The organization’s nearly 740 employees provide wastewater management, drainage and flood protection services across the 376 square miles of Louisville Metro, and wastewater service in portions of Bullitt and Oldham counties. In addition to operating and maintaining Louisville Metro’s sewer system, floodwall system, water quality treatment centers and flood pumping stations, MSD invests in hundreds of infrastructure improvement projects each year, plants more than 1,000 trees and other vegetation annually to enhance water filtration and reduce runoff, and provides numerous outreach programs to inform and educate the community about protecting our waterways.