



For Immediate Release
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City of Port Washington receives We Energies Foundation grant to expand groundbreaking real-time rip-current identification technology

PORT WASHINGTON, WI: The City of Port Washington has received funding in the amount of \$15,000 from the We Energies Foundation to help advance its efforts to expand groundbreaking real-time rip-current identification technology to the City's South Beach in the Summer of 2017. This real-time rip-current identification technology, titled "Integrated Nowcast/Forecast Operation System" (**INFOS**), was created by Dr. Chin Wu, Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Director of the Environmental/Ecological Fluid Mechanics and Coastal Sustainability Lab at UW-Madison. It was first implemented off of North Beach in the City of Port Washington in the Summer of 2015.

The partnership that led to the development and implementation of INFOS technology off of North Beach consisted of Dr. Wu; the City of Port Washington; Wisconsin Coastal Management Program; UW-Sea Grant Institute; and NOAA Coastal Storms Program. It dated to September 2012, when on Labor Day weekend, the City of Port Washington lost one of its own, 15 year-old Tyler Buczek, to rip currents off of North Beach. Subsequent to this tragedy, the City, under the leadership of Mayor Tom Mlada, formed a Waterfront Safety Team to identify ways to make the lakefront in Port Washington as safe as possible and secure funding to implement them. Dr. Wu and his team, focused at the time on bluff stability along Wisconsin's shoreline, recognized a very significant way they could partner on the city's Waterfront Safety efforts through rip current identification – and INFOS Port Washington was unofficially born.

"Our City of Port Washington Waterfront Safety Team believes the innovative INFOS Port Washington technology has played an important role in two consecutive summers with no public safety incidents off our shores in Port Washington," said Mayor Tom Mlada. "In short, INFOS has made and is making our waterfront community safer for residents and visitors alike – and now, thanks in part to the extraordinary and impactful generosity of our friends at the We Energies Foundation, we are excited to have the opportunity to expand this public safety commitment to South Beach as well."

The INFOS technology serves to capture essential near-shore water information, such as data related to waves and currents, and uses that information to identify potential rip current development and communicate those public safety concerns to beach visitors. With roughly 40% of the deaths in the Great Lakes over the past 10 years attributable to rip currents, development of an effective, real-time warning system became a high priority and personal mission for Dr. Wu.

“Our goal was to create a usable technology – a functional public website – that would provide modeling results and combine those models with real-time, high-integrity data,” Dr. Wu said. “Through utilization of a wave sensor (buoy) and a webcam, we are able to develop high-resolution imagery the public can view and use as a guide in monitoring beach safety.”

In fact, the City of Port Washington is the first waterfront community in the nation with this online rip current awareness/warning system for its public beaches.

“Safety is a core company value,” said Terry Hoffman, asset manager of the We Energies Port Washington Generating Station. “We are committed not only to the safety of our employees but also to the safety of our customers and the communities we serve.”

INFOS Port Washington can be found at: <http://infosportwashington.cee.wisc.edu/>

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