

DEA Hopes to Remove a Third of a Million Pounds of Expired Prescription Drugs from Circulation

Local News

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SEATTLE, Wash. - After collecting an average of 400,000 pounds of expired, unwanted prescription medications at each of its previous five events in the past three years, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and its national, tribal, and community partners will hold a sixth National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day across the country on Saturday, April 27th.

There will be 31 collection sites throughout the state of Alaska open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. local time. Last September, residents of Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and Oregon turned in 28,186 pounds (over 12 tons) of prescription medications. The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked.

The public has embraced the opportunity these Take-Back Day events provide to prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous expired, unused, or unwanted prescription drugs. Since September 2010, local law enforcement has partnered with DEA in thousands of American communities to take in and dispose of over two million pounds (1,018 tons) of expired prescription drugs.

Unused medications in homes create a public health and safety concern, because they are highly susceptible to accidental ingestion, diversion, misuse, and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. are alarmingly high--more Americans currently abuse prescription drugs than the number of those using cocaine, hallucinogens, and heroin combined, according to the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health. The majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet, according to surveys of users.

The public can find a nearby collection site by visiting www.dea.gov, clicking on the "Got Drugs?" icon, and following the links to a database where they enter their zip code. Only solid medicines may be turned in. No liquids, injectables or needles will be accepted.

Four days after DEA's first Take-Back event 30 months ago, Congress passed the Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010, which amends the Controlled Substances Act to allow an "ultimate user" of controlled substance medications to dispose of them by delivering them to entities authorized by the Attorney General to accept them. The Act also allows the Attorney General to authorize long term care facilities to dispose of their residents' controlled substances in certain instances. DEA is in the process of drafting regulations to implement the Act.