

Pacific Northwest Residents Turned in Over 16 Tons During National Take Back Day

Local News

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Posted on : May 3, 2013 at 4:55 am

The United States Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) Sixth National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day this past Saturday collected 50 percent more pills than the previous one, demonstrating the American public's continued appreciation and need for the opportunity to discard unwanted, unused and expired prescription drugs from medicine cabinets, bedside tables, and kitchen drawers.

On April 27, 742,497 pounds (371 tons) of prescription medications were collected from members of the public at more than 5,829 locations manned by 4,312 state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies that partnered with DEA on the event. When added to the collections from DEA's previous five Take-Back events, more than 2.8 million pounds (1,409 tons) of prescription medications have been removed from circulation.

Residents of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Alaska turned in 33,589 pounds (16.7 tons) of prescription medications. This number surpassed the last Take Back on September 29, 2012 by two tons and record numbers were collected in Washington, Oregon and Alaska. The following are the results broken down by state:

Washington - 90 collection sites which resulted in 14,992 pounds (7.4 tons) removed from circulation. Idaho - 30 collection sites which resulted in 4,244 (2.1 tons) removed from circulation. Oregon - 55 collection sites which resulted in 10,422 pounds (5.2 tons) removed from circulation. Alaska - 31 collection sites which resulted in 3,931 pounds (1.9 tons) removed from circulation.

According to the 2011 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), twice as many Americans regularly abused prescription drugs than the number of those who regularly used cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, and inhalants combined. That same study revealed more than 70 percent of people abusing prescription pain relievers got them through friends or relatives, a statistic that includes raiding the family medicine cabinet.

The DEA's Take-Back events are a significant piece of the White House's prescription drug abuse prevention strategy released in 2011 by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Disposal of unwanted, unused or expired drugs is one of four strategies for reducing prescription drug abuse and diversion laid out in Epidemic: Responding to America's Prescription Drug Abuse Crisis. The other strategies include education of health care providers, patients, parents and youth; enhancing and

encouraging the establishment of prescription drug monitoring programs in all the states; and increased enforcement to address doctor shopping and pill mills.

Shortly after DEA's first Take-Back Day event two-and-a-half years ago, Congress passed, and President Obama signed, the Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010, which amended the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) to allow the DEA to develop permanent, ongoing, and responsible methods for disposing of controlled-substance medications. Prior to the passage of the above-cited Act, the CSA provided no legal means for transferring possession of controlled substance medications from users to other individuals for disposal. On December 21, 2012, DEA published a Notice of Proposed Rule Making on the Disposal of Controlled Substances that seeks to implement the above-cited Act