



March 8, 2010

Agencies to hold home medicine take back event March 13

Lane County residents can turn in their unwanted, outdated or expired household medicines at two locations on Saturday, March 13.

The household medicine “take-back” event will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Eugene Water & Electric Board, 500 E. Fourth Ave., and at Springfield City Hall, 225 Fifth St., Springfield. Representatives of several public agencies and law-enforcement agencies will be on hand to accept any medicines or other pharmaceuticals for proper disposal.

The Lane County event is part of a statewide effort aimed at reducing the risk of household medicines being misused, abused, accidentally consumed by children, or improperly disposed in a manner that threatens water quality. More than two dozen other Oregon cities are holding similar events March 13.

In addition to the threat of abuse or misuse, flushing expired or unwanted household medicines down sinks or toilets raises the risk of pharmaceuticals getting into water supplies, said Nancy Toth, an EWEB environmental associate who is helping to coordinate the Lane County event.

“Educating the public about the proper way to discard medicines will help keep people safe and our drinking water clean,” she said.

At the March 13 events, organizers will be accepting any unwanted or expired prescription or over-the-counter medicines, drugs that are no longer used, medicines from deceased family members, pet medicines, and any unknown tablets or capsules.

Local organizers are EWEB; Lane County’s Public Health, Emergency Management, Waste Management, Youth Services and Sheriff’s departments; the City of Springfield’s Public Works and Police departments; the Springfield Utility Board; and the City of Eugene’s Police and Public Works departments. The Oregon Medical Association Alliance, Community Action to Reduce Substance Abuse (CARSA) and the Oregon Partnership are statewide sponsors.

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Fact sheet: Unwanted or expired pharmaceuticals

- The U.S. Geological Survey and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality water quality samplings have found trace amounts of pharmaceuticals in some Oregon streams and rivers, and focused studies have found pharmaceuticals in groundwater.
- Flushing unwanted drugs down the toilet – in households, hospice and palliative care providers and long term care facilities – are one primary way drugs reach wastewater treatment plants and eventually, our waterways.
- Today, the average American takes more than 12 different prescription drugs each year – more than 3.8 billion prescriptions purchased annually, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Oregon ranks among the top states for non-medical use of pain relievers among 12-17 year olds. Teens say prescription drugs are widely available from an array of sources, including their homes, friends and relatives.
- Locking your meds is a household strategy that is gaining more popularity, as parents realize that most teens who abuse prescription drugs acquire them from medicine cabinets at the homes of parents, relatives, or friends.
- Young people often perceive prescription drugs to be safer than illicit drugs to get high, leading them to casually share these drugs with friends. These include painkillers (OxyContin), depressants (Xanax) and stimulants (Adderall and Ritalin).
- More teens abuse prescription drugs than cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine combined. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), prescription drug abuse is higher among 18-25 year olds than in any other age group.
- Although the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs among youth has declined from 2002 through 2008, over this time many teens have turned to misusing prescription drugs, according to SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
- Prescription drugs are misused more by this age group than any illicit drug, except marijuana.

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