



**City  
of  
Milwaukee**

**LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU  
Research & Analysis Section**

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**MEMORANDUM**

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To: Ald. James Bohl  
From: Amy E. Hefter, Legislative Fiscal Analyst  
Date: 1/21/2011  
Re: Unwanted medication drop off sites.

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The following information is in response to your request for information regarding the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) police department unwanted medication drop-off program, Milwaukee Police Department's reasoning for not participating in this program and other cities' efforts to collect unwanted medicine.

Thirteen of 19 police departments in Milwaukee County participate in the MMSD unwanted medication drop-off program. The police departments are: Bayside, Brown Deer, Cudahy, Fox Point, Franklin, Greendale, Oak Creek, River Hills, Shorewood, South Milwaukee, St. Francis, West Milwaukee, and Whitefish Bay.

Residents of these communities may drop off unwanted medications at their respective police departments. City of Milwaukee residents **may not** drop off their unwanted medications at other police departments in Milwaukee County.

The last Medicine Collection Day in Milwaukee County was held Saturday, May 8, 2010, at Miller Park. City of Milwaukee residents could participate in this county-wide drop off day. In an e-mail response from Bill Graffin, MMSD Public Information Manager, on January 10, 2011, he noted that a date had not yet been set for a 2011 Miller Park collection.

Numerous attempts were made to contact the Milwaukee Police Department for an explanation as to why it does not participate in the MMSD unwanted medication program but as of this date the department has not responded.

The MMSD Website recommends:

"If you need to get unused medications out of your home, the federal government recommends throwing them in the garbage. Grind up old meds and mix them with coffee grounds or something nasty that no one would want to eat. Or, dissolve pills in a jar or can with water and kitty litter." (MMSD Police Department Medicine Collections  
<http://v3.mmsd.com/policestations.aspx>)

There are three different types of unwanted medicine programs: programs offering continuous drop-off sites, sponsoring single day collection events and mail-back programs. La Crosse (WI) offers a continuous drop-off sites program, Cleveland (OH) sponsors a single day collection event, and the state of Maine utilizes a mail-back program.

La Crosse(WI) offers a continuous drop-off sites program. La Crosse County solid waste managers developed a plan for disposing of household's unneeded medicines, including controlled substances. Four staff members from the solid waste department have been conditionally deputized by the county sheriff to receive controlled medicines *strictly for the purpose of safe disposal and for drugs from schedules II, III, IV, and V* (i.e. prescription medicines, but not schedule I, which includes recreational drugs). The deputation is temporary, lasting until 2011, and can be renewed. It specifically outlines the authority of the staff: they are not authorized to perform other law enforcement activities such as making arrests, and they are not eligible to be called up to serve as law enforcement in emergency situations the same way the county sheriff's police are. La Crosse County sought and obtained approval for the deputation from the state DEA in order to ensure compliance with the law.

La Crosse County residents can drop off all of their unneeded household medicines for free at the county's hazardous materials facility. The program is also available with a small fee to residents of other counties and to businesses that qualify as VSQGs (Very Small Quantity Generators of hazardous waste). These may include nursing care facilities, public health departments, and schools. The facility is open for drop-offs every Tuesday and Thursday by appointment and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month no appointment necessary.

Program participants bring their medicines to the facility where staff inventories the controlled substances and then supervise the residents dropping the medicine through a funnel into a 55-gallon drum of solvent. The drum contains naptha and ipecac to deter diversion of the discarded drugs as well as water to dissolve the medicines. Program organizers state that within approximately 2 days, the drugs are completely dissolved, leaving a brown, gooey residue. The DEA does not require inventorying of the collected medicines. However, the county's hazardous waste contractor, Veolia, requested that an inventory be kept of the drum's contents to ensure that appropriate disposal methods are used.

When the drum is full, it is transported using a La Crosse County vehicle and accompanied by two deputized staff to Veolia's hazardous waste incinerator near St. Louis, MO for disposal. Program organizers estimate that this will be necessary approximately once or twice per year. The total annual cost including staffing is estimated to be \$12,000-\$15,000. Currently, these costs are being covered by the solid waste department's regular operating budget; they have not received additional operating funds for disposal or for salary to staff the operation. La Crosse County is raising \$25,000 to cover startup costs including advertising, printing, and additional security at the facility (cameras, active system, etc). Future costs will be partially offset by revenue generated by providing disposal services to area VSQGs. La Crosse Household Hazardous Materials Drop Off Website: <http://www.cityoflacrosse.org/index.aspx?nid=1167>

The City of Cleveland (OH) sponsors a single day collection event. The Cleveland Department of Public Health organized the event with the following partners Division of Waste Collection and Environmental Enterprises, Inc. Due to the fact that Environmental Enterprises, Inc. had all of the appropriate licensing and disposal procedures in place, no police involvement was necessary. Two locations were set up as collection sites and the event was hosted in the City of Cleveland, however advertisements of the event were sent to all residents of Cuyahoga County. The total cost for this one-day event was \$18,318, which was funded through a grant from the U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office to the Division of Waste Collection. A portion of the grant was then distributed to the Cleveland Department of Public Health for

collection and disposal of the unwanted pharmaceuticals. The collection and disposal of 381 lbs of pharmaceutical materials cost \$4,381, according to Environmental Enterprises, Inc. The remainder of the grant (\$13,937) went towards setting up an advertisement campaign. Due to lack of funding no ongoing programs or plans for future events currently exist in the City of Cleveland. City of Cleveland Public Health Department Website  
<http://www.clevelandhealth.org/>

Maine offers state residents a mail-back program, the Safe Medicine Disposal for ME program provides Maine's residents with a safe disposal option for unused and unwanted medicine. Free medicine mailback envelopes are available at participating sites. This program is funded through an allocation from the Fund for Healthy Maine administered by the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency. Under this system, consumers use prepaid mailing envelopes to send their unwanted pharmaceuticals to the Maine DEA. The envelopes are made available to the public at various locations including pharmacies, physicians' offices, and post offices. All envelopes with the unused medicine are returned to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency for safe storage. The Maine Drug Enforcement Agency oversees disposal of returned medicine. Please see the Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Website for detailed information: <http://www.safemeddisposal.com/>

I hope this information proves helpful. Please contact me at x2290 with any questions.