

NEWS RELEASE

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Prescription Drug Disposal Program: Unwanted/Expired Medications Collection

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On, Saturday, April 25, 2009, residents are encouraged to rid themselves of any unwanted/expired medications at a collection site, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Illinois State Fairgrounds, Lot 21 entering Gate 11. This initiative is sponsored by the Illinois EPA, Sangamon County Department of Public Health, C.W.L. P., Illinois/Indiana Sea Grant, Illinois Lake Management Association, Sangamon County Sheriff's Department and Springfield Metro Sanitary District. Residents can properly dispose of the following items: over the counter medications, medicated aerosol products, medicated shampoos, soaps, creams, and pressurized inhalers. **No controlled substances will be accepted. If you have questions about whether or not your medication is considered a controlled substance, contact your pharmacist.**

Residents are asked not to flush their pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs). The PPCPs can enter the water supply via sinks, toilets, or trash disposals. Most people dispose of human and pet medication either by flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash. These methods create the potential for harmful chemicals to end up in our rivers and streams. An excess of PPCP in the water can harm the local aquatic ecosystem. The effects of pharmaceuticals can be observed in certain aquatic life, such as the feminization and altered neurological behavior in fish. Medications that are flushed down the toilet can build up in the water system and alter the environment. Even medications that are thrown in the trash can spend years degrading into the soil and making their way into the water supply. In addition to the effect on the water, chemicals from medicinal waste can end up in fertilizers used for agricultural land.

Pharmaceutical-related chemicals have been found in trace amounts in samples of finished drinking water. Waste water treatment and drinking water treatment plants do not have the technology to remove 100 percent of the drugs. With increasing amounts of PPCPs entering rivers and streams that provide the source of much of our water supply, and with increases in the use of medications by the aging baby boomer generation, it is important to take steps to reduce their impact on water resources.

Several environmental groups in Illinois have teamed together with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to create drug disposal sites within the state. These sites were created in order to provide an environmentally safe method of disposing of old, expired, and unwanted medications.

“Sangamon County was on the forefront with including acceptance of unwanted and expired medications within our Household Hazardous Waste collections two years ago,” said Angela Harris, Recycling Coordinator with the Sangamon County Department of Public Health. “We believe it is important to educate residents on how to properly dispose of their medications. Illinois EPA notified us that due to the State's budget, we were not selected for a HHW collection this year. Therefore, we are focusing solely on collecting unwanted and expired medications.” This event is a prelude to establishing permanent drop-off location programs.