

INDUSTRY IMPLEMENTED DRUG TAKE-BACK PROGRAMS: A California Success

Background

Unused or out of date medications not only create a costly waste stream for communities to manage, they pose a threat to both the environment and public safety when they are disposed of improperly or stockpiled in the home. The amount collected during special events demonstrates that there are incalculable tons of these products out there needing to be managed. For instance, the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency's 13th National Take Back Day in April 2017 collected almost **37.5 tons** in California in a single day.

To date eleven California jurisdictions have passed ordinances requiring manufacturers of prescription and over the counter medications to operate convenient collection programs for household drugs. Four also require collection of sharps (needles) to protect public safety and workers handling solid waste.

These programs are being implemented successfully by an industry-created organization called MED Project, which places collection bins in hospitals, pharmacies, and police stations, holds special events, and provides mail-back options where appropriate.

The growing number of local ordinances requiring such medicine and sharps collection programs demonstrates both public support for and the effectiveness of an extended producer responsibility (EPR) model to deal with hazardous waste that poses a threat to public safety and the environment.

California Communities with EPR Pharma Ordinances

- Alameda County (July 2012)
- City & County of San Francisco (March 2015)
- San Mateo County (April 2015)
- Santa Clara County (June 2015)
- Marin County (August 2015)
- Santa Cruz County (medications & sharps – December 2015)
- Santa Barbara County (June 2016)
- City of Santa Cruz (medications & sharps – August 2016)
- City of Capitola (medications & sharps – August 2016)
- City of Scotts Valley (medications & sharps – December 2016)
- Contra Costa County (December 2016)

Program Success

- To date **128 bins** have been placed in **Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, Marin, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz** and MED Project has recruited locations to distribute mail-back envelopes and hold one-day collection events.
- Kaiser Permanente has an agreement with MED Project to host bins at **40 Kaiser pharmacies** in the Bay Area including 13 in Alameda, 3 in Marin, 3 in San Francisco, 7 in San Mateo, 12 in Santa Clara, and 2 in Santa Cruz.
- MED Project has begun **placing ads** to promote the program in the Bay Area.

Bin Numbers by County

(as of August 2017)

- Alameda County – 27 bins
- City & County of San Francisco – 31 bins
- San Mateo County – 35 bins
- Santa Clara County – 12 bins expected by August 21, 2017
- Marin County – 15 bins
- Santa Cruz County & cities – 8 bins
- Santa Barbara County – stewardship plan under review.
- Contra Costa County – stewardship plan pending.



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