

Bay Area, California

Program Overview: The Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group (BAPPG), a consortium of the 39-wastewater treatment plants from Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Marin, Santa Clara, Napa, San Mateo, Sonoma, and Solano counties, established a pharmaceuticals working group that includes wastewater agencies, household hazardous waste programs, and several state agencies. The goals of the BAPPG Pharmaceutical Working Group are:

- To develop a consistent, clear regional message regarding management of unwanted residential pharmaceuticals; and
- To develop and promote implementation of a long-term strategy for management of residential unwanted medicines.

In May 2006, the BAPPG piloted a first-of-its-kind regional collection event for residential pharmaceutical waste that was branded “Safe Medicine Disposal Week.” The week included 59 medication collection events in 39 locations that included Walgreens, City Hall, and Senior Centers within 5 of the Bay Area Counties.

Key Motivation: The BAPPG organized this campaign in hopes of raising awareness about the potential public health and environmental risks posed by disposal of pharmaceutical products.

Organizing Body: The BAPPG (a consortium of the 39 Waste Treatment Plants from Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Marin, Santa Clara, Napa, San Mateo, Sonoma, and Solano counties) led this week-long collection event.

Partners: Walgreens in the nine Bay Area counties, the Central Marin Sanitation Agency, the San Rafael Fire Department, the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program, and the Marin County Hazardous and Solid Waste Program all contributed to the pharmaceutical collection efforts.

Level of Implementation: Each of the wastewater treatment plants organized separate collection events for their service areas; however, their efforts were coordinated on a regional level by the BAPPG.

Cost: Advertising expenditures from all partner agencies totaled \$86,360, and disposal fees added another \$3,645 to the budget (\$50,000 was from one agency). Total staff time spent on the events was 1,980 hours, which included time planning and training for the events as well as operating and cleaning up after the collections and performing evaluations of the effectiveness of the events.

Outcome: The Safe Medicine Collection Event was considered a success, and local agencies collected 3,634 pounds of pharmaceutical waste from approximately 1,500 residents. Collected medicines were sent for incineration. For more detailed information about this program, please refer to www.baywise.info/disposaldays and see the final report at <http://oracwa.org/files/news/168/SFBAYSafeMeds-Report-August2006.pdf>

Other Activities: Event staff surveyed participants dropping off medication. The data gathered from the event's survey results provided a means of evaluating the role of regional partnership in garnering local participation. Staff also collected data on the sources of the medications (participant's medicine cabinet or that of relatives), reasons why the medication was not used (expired or unwanted, etc.), and participant demographics.

Lessons Learned: Event based collection events are an inefficient way to have residents properly dispose of medications, since the events require an enormous amount of resources including outreach, advertising and staff time to organize and table the event.

Long-term Actions: The organizers are considering holding another pilot program under which an individual pharmacy would accept returned medicines year-round. They are also considering pre-paid mailers as a return mechanism for drugs.

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