

La Crosse, Wisconsin

Program Overview: La Crosse County solid waste managers developed an innovative plan for disposing of households' 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. A copy of the agreement language follows this case study.

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 Wednesday and every other Saturday and by appointment on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Program participants bring their medicines to the facility where staff inventory the controlled substances and then supervise the residents dropping the medicine through a funnel into a 55-gallon drum of solvent. The drum contains naphtha and ipecac to deter diversion of the discarded drugs as well as water to dissolve the medicines. Program organizers state that within approximately two 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 event was publicized via promotional flyers, which are being distributed to customers at local pharmacies. La Crosse County also runs radio ads for the program year-round.

Collection Site: Collection takes place at the county's hazardous materials facility, which has served in the past as the drop-off point for other materials such as paints, pesticides and electronics. The facility is centrally located in the county and is easily accessible from the interstate and other major highways in the county.



Key Motivation: The program was started due to concerns about environmental impacts of medicine waste as well as to protect against accidental poisoning and drug abuse. La Crosse County Solid Waste managers developed a way to controvert the conventional wisdom that has said that it "can't be done" under the existing rules. They have found a way to meet regulatory requirements, accept controlled substances, ensure that all collected material is incinerated at a licensed facility, provide service to businesses, and provide permanent, year round collection.

Organizing Body: La Crosse County Solid Waste Department

Partners: La Crosse County Sheriff's Office
La Crosse area local pharmacies
Franciscan Skemp Medical Center
La Crosse area US Fish & Wildlife office

Level of Implementation: The collection was organized at the county level.

Cost: Veolia charges La Crosse County a disposal fee of \$650 per drum of medicine waste. Additionally, Veolia charges a \$1,800 witnessed burn fee for disposal of these medicines since it must move the drum of medicines to the front of its line and destroy them immediately upon receipt.

Other costs included \$2,000 to print 160,000 flyers publicizing the event.

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.

Outcome: The program has been in operation for approximately one month. Participation is increasing as more people hear about the program. Area VSQGs and other counties have expressed interest in using this disposal method.

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STEVEN J. HELGESON
SHERIFF

JEFFREY A. WOLF
CHIEF DEPUTY

As an employee of the La Crosse County Household Hazardous Materials Program, you are conditionally deputized for the sole purpose of collecting and properly disposing of Schedule II, III, IV, and V medications while on duty.

The conditional appointment to the position of Deputy Sheriff does not grant you the power of arrest or the authority to possess or carry a firearm or any other weapon in a manner that is not permissible by statutes for a non-deputized citizen.

This conditional deputation expires January 2, 2011 or immediately upon termination of employment with the Household Hazardous Materials Program. The Sheriff also has the discretion to rescind the deputation.

I understand the above information and agree to abide by the provisions.



Signature of Employee

JEFF GLOYD

Printed Name

Special Waste Manager

Title

5/24/07

Date



Sheriff Signature

5-24-07

Date