

Washington State

Program Overview: In 2005, Washington State (population 6,287,759) proposed a statewide pilot program to return medications for proper disposal. Known as Pharmaceuticals from Households: A Return Mechanism (PH:ARM), this program is an organized method of taking back unwanted/expired pharmaceuticals from households. The program uses secure containers for collection as well as secure, licensed transporters from pickup of consolidated material to destruction. Additionally, the program provides witnessed incineration of the unwanted medicines. Therefore, PH:ARM tracks unwanted pharmaceuticals in bulk from collection to end-destruction. PH:ARM relies on existing commercial relationships and does not require inventory of individual items by busy pharmacists and reverse distributors.

The PH:ARM program has the following four aims:

1. Secure system (secure collection, transport, destruction)
2. Low-cost and financially sustainable
3. Effective (volume recovered)
 - a. Accessible & user-friendly
 - b. Ongoing
4. Government is regulating and overseeing but not funding the program

Collection Sites: The PH:ARM program was planned to operate at approximately one hundred locations in Puget Sound starting in 2006/2007, including pharmacies and nursing homes.

Key Motivation: Organizers identified public health and environmental concerns as the primary reasons for the creation of the PH:ARM program. Washington State has recognized the need to prevent accidental poisoning by reducing access to excess pharmaceuticals in households and to reduce water pollution from pharmaceutical chemicals, as well as to foster producer responsibility and reduce waste in the first place.

Organizing Body: The PH:ARM initiative was driven by the following organizations:

- Interagency Resource for Achieving Cooperation (IRAC)
- Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County
- Snohomish County Solid Waste Management Division
- Seattle-King County Public Health
- Northwest Product Stewardship Council
- Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation
- Pacific NW Pollution Prevention Resource Center
- Washington Department of Social and Human Services- Aging and Disabilities Services
- Washington State Department of Ecology (Solid Waste and Financial Assistance)
- Washington Board of Pharmacy
- Group Health Cooperative
- Bartell Drug Company

Partners: Other PH:ARM affiliates and supporters include:

- Puget Sound Action Team's Public Information and Education fund
- The Russell Family Foundation
- Seattle Public Utilities
- Group Health Foundation

Refer to [section 3](#) of this binder for Washington's directories of vendors that assist in the management of unwanted/expired pharmaceuticals. The directories list reverse distributors and companies that manage drugs, sharps, or hazardous wastes. They provide suggestions for making the return or destruction of drugs safer, easier, and compliant with regulations.

Level of Implementation: The PH:ARM program for medication disposal aims to be implemented on a statewide basis.

Cost: The projected cost of a statewide program is \$3.3 M (based on initial collection volumes), or approximately \$5.60 per pound of medication collected. Initial volumes from seven locations have been about 1,000 lbs since October 2006.

Outcome: In total, between 66,138 lbs and 429,821 lbs (based on pilot collection rate) are projected to be collected through this approach statewide. Of this, 10%, or between 6 million and 35 million pills, is expected to be controlled substances.

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