

Southern California

Program Overview: The City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, and Orange County Sanitation District launched a new public education campaign to address disposal of household medications in Southern California. The campaign's tagline, *No Drugs Down the Drain*, is meant to encourage Southern California residents to dispose of their unneeded medicine in ways more appropriate than flushing it down the toilet.

The primary element of the program is a [two-sided, bilingual postcard](#) that alerts Southern California residents to the problems associated with flushing unwanted and expired medications down the toilet or drain. As alternatives, the program recommends taking them to a household hazardous waste collection center/event (no controlled substances are allowed) or disposing of them in the trash in a sturdy and secure container, taking precautions to avoid accidental ingestion by children and animals and to prevent diversion for illicit uses. The card was developed with input from a broader group interested in residential pharmaceutical disposal including city, county, state, federal, and private participants. The card is included in [Section 4 of this resource kit](#)—“[Public Education/Outreach Materials-Models.](#)”

The program kicked off on March 19, 2006 to coincide with National Poison Prevention Week. Cards in lots of 1,500 - 2,000 were sent to approximately 1,900 pharmacies in Los Angeles and Orange Counties with a request to distribute the cards to customers as prescriptions are filled. Cards are also being handed out at Household Hazardous Waste Centers/Events (see sites below) and at agency outreach functions, and were made available to Los Angeles County Public Works for their public counters and to Los Angeles County Health Services for their clinics. Additionally, more than 25% of the cities in Los Angeles County (apart from the City of Los Angeles who is a primary sponsor of the program) have requested cards to distribute to their residents either at public counters, city events, or through direct mailings. As of August 2006, the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, and Orange County Sanitation District had distributed approximately 3.7 million cards.

There is an associated website (www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org) to provide more detailed information on the program such as why flushing is a problem, household hazardous waste collection event links, discussion of controlled substances (which will not be accepted at the household hazardous waste events because of Drug Enforcement Administration requirements), tips on how to more safely dispose of medications in the trash, etc.

The disposal options outlined in the *No Drugs Down the Drain* program have been determined by the wastewater agency sponsors from Los Angeles and Orange counties to be appropriate in the geographical areas for which these sponsors have oversight. These options may not be feasible for other areas because of technical, economic, or institutional reasons.

Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts and Orange County Sanitation District conducted follow-up surveys of pharmacies. The response rate to Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts was approximately 12% and was overwhelmingly positive with approximately 92% indicating that they would participate again next year.

Collection Sites: Unwanted medications are accepted at household hazardous waste collection events in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Ultimate disposal is via incineration as hazardous waste.

The Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts and Los Angeles County Department of Public Works co-sponsor mobile collection events, which are scheduled in different areas throughout the county each weekend. They are free, open to all Los Angeles County residents, and are usually held on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. An appointment is not needed to participate in a collection event. Visit http://www.lacsd.org/info/hhw_e_waste/default.asp or <http://ladpw.org/epd/hhw> for additional information.

Additionally, the City of Los Angeles has established six permanent collection sites throughout the City, known as S.A.F.E. (Solvents/Automotive/Flammables/Electronics) Centers. The Bureau of Sanitation also sponsors periodic mobile collection events throughout the City. Both the permanent and mobile events are free, open to all Los Angeles County residents, and accept medications. Visit http://www.lacity.org/san/solid_resources/special/hhw/ for more information.

Other cities in Los Angeles County have established residential HHW collection programs, however, not all of them will accept medications. Contact information for these cities is listed at http://ladpw.org/epd/hhw/local_city_collection.cfm, and individual cities should be contacted to determine if unwanted medications are accepted.

There are four permanent Household Hazardous Waste collection centers in Orange County which accept medications from Orange County residents. They are free, open to Orange County residents, and operate Tuesday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m (except on rainy days and certain holidays). Visit <http://www.oilandfills.com/hhwcc.asp> for additional information.

Key Motivation: The Los Angeles County Sanitation District has noted that the discharge of pharmaceuticals to the environment is an emerging national issue that is receiving a great deal of attention from both the scientific community and the public. Therefore, a proactive, source-based approach to removing these substances from the wastewater stream was deemed prudent in order to minimize future potential impacts on the environment.

Organizing Body: The City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, and Orange County Sanitation District are the main entities responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the No Drugs Down the Drain program.

Partners: The following organizations teamed up with the above three agencies in 2006 to advance proper disposal methods. In 2007, the program is expected to be expanded with additional support from Los Angeles County agencies in order to broaden educational efforts and evaluate additional collection opportunities.

- California Pharmacists Association
- California Poison Control System
- City of Alhambra
- City of Arcadia
- City of Azusa and Azusa Light & Water
- City of Beverly Hills
- City of Cerritos and Cerritos Senior Center
- City of Compton

- City of El Segundo
- City of Gardena
- City of Hawthorne
- City of Industry
- City of Lawndale
- City of Lynwood
- City of Manhattan Beach
- City of Maywood
- City of Monrovia
- City of Monterey Park
- City of Norwalk
- City of Paramount
- City of Rancho Palos Verdes
- City of San Diego
- City of San Fernando
- City of Santa Clarita
- City of Walnut
- City of West Hollywood
- City of Whittier
- Ford Park Community Adult School
- Los Angeles County Public Works
- Los Angeles County Health Services
- Orange County Integrated Waste Management
- Walnut Valley Water District

Level of Implementation: This program is active on a countywide basis in Los Angeles County and within the service area of Orange County Sanitation District

Cost: Three agencies (Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, City of Los Angeles, and Orange County Sanitation Districts) have spent approximately \$80,000 to print and mail informational cards and develop the website (www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org). In-kind services, mainly in the form of staff time, were also provided by each agency, but no attempt to quantify the cost of these services has been made.

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