



Skagit County Public Health

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Secure Medicine Return – Summary Skagit County Code Chapter 12.20

On February 21, 2018 the Skagit County Board of Health approved Ordinance # 020180003 thereby adopting Skagit County Code Chapter 12.20 *Secure Medicine Return*. This ordinance requires the establishment of an industry-financed and operated system for the safe receipt, handling and disposal of unwanted medications within Skagit County. Pharmaceutical producers are required to identify and select a stewardship organization to develop and operate a medicine return program. This program will:

Expand safe medicine disposal options for Skagit County residents to reduce risks of misuse, poisonings and overdoses from leftover and expired medications; and reduce pharmaceuticals entering sewer, septic and solid waste systems.

Improve convenience for residents by increasing the number of secured drop box locations at local law enforcement offices, pharmacies and hospitals; provide opportunity for scheduled collection events and offer postage-paid mailers for Skagit County residents, as allowed under DEA regulation.

Ensure financial sustainability through an industry-financed system that will provide sufficient resources to promote collection, handle larger volumes of returned medications and relieve the existing burden on local government agencies and taxpayers.

The Secure Medicine Return Regulation follows an extended producer responsibility (EPR) model, which is designed to integrate environmental costs associated with goods, throughout their life cycles, into the price of the products. Residents cannot be charged a fee for this service when purchasing, or returning medications. Similar pharmaceutical EPR regulations have been adopted in several counties in Washington and California. In Spring 2018, the State of Washington passed a state wide pharmaceutical EPR regulation.

Ordinance Elements

Medicine Accepted. Collection sites, special collection events and pre-paid mailers can accept the following home medications:

- Prescription medications, including legally prescribed controlled substances, such as narcotics and stimulants.
- Non-prescription, or over-the-counter medications.
- Medications can be a brand name or generic, in all forms (pills, creams, gels, ointments, liquids).
- Veterinary or pet medications from the home are also accepted.

Medications not accepted include vitamins and supplements; herbal-based or homeopathic products; personal care products or cosmetics (toothpaste, sunscreen, etc.); pharmaceutical waste from businesses; or other specified exempt drugs.

Collection Systems. The medicine return program must provide reasonable, convenient and equitable access for all residents.

- Any DEA authorized pharmacy, hospital, or law enforcement facility that volunteers to host a drop box will be able to.
- Every city must have at least two secured drop boxes and every town which has an eligible pharmacy, hospital or a law enforcement facility must have at least 1 drop box.

- In places where there are not enough drop boxes, collection events or pre-paid return mailers must be provided.
- Pre-paid return mailers will also be available for residents via mail and at participating municipal offices.

Secure Handling and Packaging. Producers or their stewardship organizations must handle collected medicines securely and confidentially. They must:

- Comply with all applicable state and federal laws.
- Protect patient confidentiality.
- Recycle packaging, when possible.

Disposal. Collected medicine must be destroyed at an EPA approved hazardous waste facility. Skagit County Public Health may approve the following alternative methods:

- A large municipal waste combustion facility.
- Other disposal technologies that are safer for the environment and human health.

Education and Outreach. Producers or their stewardship organizations must:

- Promote safe storage of medicine and use of the secure medicine return system.
- Provide educational materials to stakeholders, in multiple languages.
- Discourage disposal of medicine in the trash.
- Use consistent looking secure drop boxes and clear instructions on how to use them.

Reporting and Evaluation. Producers or their stewardship organizations must evaluate the program and report on quarterly and annual timeframes. The reports must include:

- Pounds of medicine collected, per collection method and site.
- Program operations and activities.
- Program costs.
- Effectiveness of program and promotions.

Producer Costs. Pharmaceutical manufacturers are responsible for all costs relating to:

- Collection supplies.
- Transportation and destruction of medicine.
- Program promotion.
- Administrative costs.
- Fees to Skagit County Public Health for plan review and oversight.

Implementation

- Six months after regulation is adopted (by August 20, 2018)—Stewardship plan(s) submitted to Skagit Health.
- Skagit Health will review and approve a stewardship plan once the plan meets the requirements.
- Three months after plan approval—Secure collection program operations begin.
- Every four years—Stewardship plans must be updated.

Oversight and Enforcement. Skagit County Public Health will:

- Approve the stewardship plan(s).
- Ensure stewardship organizations are following the regulation.
- Investigate complaints and enforce regulations.