

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



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Better disposal method urged for prescription meds

Sheriff Rich Stanek speaks to federal officials in Washington D.C.

January 19, 2011 (MINNEAPOLIS) – Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek is advocating for an improved, national system for the disposal of unwanted prescription medications in order to help prevent the abuse of painkillers and other medicine. Today in Washington, D.C., Sheriff Stanek testified at a public hearing hosted by the Drug Enforcement Administration and Department of Justice.

“The availability of prescription drugs is an immediate threat to the safety of our kids,” said Sheriff Stanek. “We need to work together to create safe and reasonable solutions for our residents so they can return and dispose of their unwanted medicines.”

Prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing type of illicit drug use in the U.S., and the trend is evident in Hennepin County.

Sheriff Stanek suggested one approach might be to create a federal drug takeback initiative sponsored by federal law enforcement and the pharmaceutical industry. With this partnership, Sheriff Stanek said that consumers would have a convenient way to return unwanted drugs by bringing them to their pharmacy.

“It makes more sense to have the industry that benefits from the sales of these drugs pay for the programs that will dispose of these drugs,” said Sheriff Stanek.

Pharmacies are currently set up to dispense controlled substances, so they have secure facilities and the licenses needed to possess and safeguard controlled substances.

Given the complexities of the Controlled Substances Act and other federal laws, and the limited disposal options available to local law enforcement, Sheriff Stanek said that federal agencies are better equipped to manage disposal and transport controlled substance across state boundaries.

Sheriff Stanek serves on the boards of directors for both the Major County Sheriff's Association and the National Sheriff's Association. His comments today reflect the position of both organizations.

Local law enforcement agencies across the country are working to develop ways for people to safely dispose of their prescriptions. A national public-private partnership to dispose of unwanted medications would reduce the cost burden to local law enforcement and local governments.

On September 25, 2010, Hennepin County and five other metro area counties conducted an unwanted medicine takeback event in partnership with the DEA's Minneapolis office. In Hennepin County, the Sheriff's Office provided law enforcement services for an event in St. Louis Park. Residents drove through a parking lot and handed off their medicines to law enforcement for disposal. During the event, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office received feedback from residents who said a more convenient disposal method would allow them to dispose of unwanted medications more frequently.

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