

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE, U.S. ATTORNEY BECK, DEA SPECIAL AGENT MORRIS PROMOTE PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY THIS SATURDAY

(MONTGOMERY)--- Attorney General Luther Strange, U.S. Attorney George L. Beck Jr. and DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge for Alabama Clay Morris today held a news conference urging Alabamians to participate in a Prescription Take-Back Day to be held this Saturday, September 29, at locations throughout the state.

Attorney General Strange and U.S. Attorney Beck led efforts earlier this year to strengthen and expand Alabama's participation in this recurring effort by law enforcement to promote the safe disposal of prescription drugs. The most recent Prescription Drug-Take Back events last spring were Alabama's most successful ever, with more than 50 agencies sponsoring more than 70 collection sites and collecting more than 4,000 pounds of prescription drugs to be properly destroyed.

The Prescription Drug Take-Back program is sponsored nationally by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to combat the abuse or misuse of potentially dangerous medicines that have expired or are no longer needed by those for whom these controlled substances were prescribed.

The Alabama Department of Public Health has cited prescription drug abuse as an emerging public health issue and the nation's fastest-growing drug problem. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2008, most of the deaths in the U.S. that were due to drug overdoses were caused by prescription drugs. In Alabama, the rate of prescription painkillers sold per 10,000 people in 2010 was among the highest in the nation.

Many teenagers and young people who abuse prescription drugs get them from family and friends or from their home medicine cabinets. According to a survey by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, one in five teens has tried Vicodin, a powerful addictive narcotic painkiller; one in 10 has tried OxyContin, also a prescription narcotic; and one in 10 has used stimulants such as Ritalin or Adderall for non-medical purposes, and one in 11 admit to getting high on cough syrup.

Alabamians will have the opportunity to turn in their old prescription drugs at drop-off points throughout the state on Saturday, September 29. A list of collection sites is available online at the DEA website, www.dea.gov, or citizens may inquire with their local police departments and sheriff's offices. The DEA also may be contacted toll-free by calling 1-800-882-9539.

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Law enforcement agencies and interested community partners such as pharmacies, schools, and civic groups are working together to provide as many local sites as possible throughout Alabama. Each site will be supervised by a law enforcement officer due to the involvement of controlled substances.

“We have been heartened by the positive response of agencies and citizens throughout Alabama who have responded with their support and participation,” said Attorney General Strange. “This is an important and basic step to fight drug abuse and drug-related crimes, by assisting in the removal of potentially dangerous controlled substances from our homes. Many of us have out-dated prescriptions that are too easily accessible to children and others. These drugs can also be the target of home invasions and burglaries. On September 29, we are asking the people of Alabama to protect their homes and communities by locating medicines that are out of date or no longer needed, and bringing them in for safe and proper disposal.”

“In our country, opioid pain relievers are responsible for more overdose deaths than cocaine and heroin combined,” stated U.S. Attorney Beck. “This statistic shows that we have an enormous problem with prescription pain relievers. This drug Take Back day allows us to rid our medicine cabinets of these potentially lethal drugs. We ask all of our citizens to use this day to help make their homes a safer place for their family and friends.”

Jimmy S. Fox III, the DEA Special Agent in Charge of the New Orleans Field Division of which Alabama is a part, stated, “Prescription drugs are the new crack cocaine. Consequently, the prescription drug epidemic is present in each and every state in this country and it cannot be resolved with enforcement alone. DEA recognizes the solution involves a proactive response from all affected parties including parents, children and the community as a whole.”

Prescription drugs pose dangers to children and others who may take them by accident or who may use them for abusive purposes. Expired drugs may have lost their effectiveness and therefore no longer be a safe and adequate treatment for the conditions for which they were prescribed. In addition to concerns of potential poisoning, abuse or overdose, it also is important environmentally that medicines be disposed in a proper manner rather than simply being thrown into garbage, flushed away, or poured down drains, as they could contaminate water supplies and cause an environmental hazard.

Alabama’s participation in Prescription Drug Take-Back is part of a statewide effort by a coalition of agencies to promote public awareness and education for the prevention of drug abuse. Approximately 47 law enforcement agencies will be overseeing about 67 collection sites across Alabama this Saturday, September 29, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.