

# Recommended Best Management Practices for the Disposal of Non-Controlled Medications from Consumer Collection Programs

Several factors, such as cost, should influence the decision of how best to dispose of collected unwanted medicines. But when establishing a strategy to use in a community, organizers also need to evaluate whether a local waste-to-energy facility or landfill is permitted to accept medications, and if so, under what conditions. It is also important to be able to track the unwanted medications from the point of collection through disposal. "Drug diversion," stealing or scavenging medicine for illegal use, is a growing concern. After collection, medicines for disposal may appear to be a particularly attractive waste to scavengers. Precautions against theft should be taken.

**The disposal hierarchy that follows is based on the following essential criteria:**

- ① Controlled substances are separated from the medications before being shipped for disposal. A U.S. DEA controlled substance is a drug which, because of its abuse potential, is regulated by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration. These substances cannot be accepted by anyone other than a law enforcement official at a collection site, and are subject to specific federal disposal regulations including witnessed destruction.
- ② State and federal drug management and disposal regulations as well as solid waste management and disposal laws and permits must be observed. In Florida, household generated hazardous waste is exempt from hazardous waste regulation.

**Best:** Hazardous waste incineration.

**Second Best:** Disposal through a municipal waste-to-energy facility as long as the facility has an operating permit that allows waste pharmaceuticals.

**Third Best:** Class I solid waste landfill as long as the facility's operating permit allows for the disposal of pharmaceuticals. In order to prevent diversion or theft, the containers should be immediately made non-recoverable, such as being buried upon receipt. Other practical disposal procedures may be more appropriate to the specific facility.



**NEVER flush medication  
down the drain or toilet**

Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399  
850.245.8707  
[www.dep.state.fl.us](http://www.dep.state.fl.us)

