



# Department of Justice

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Northern District of Alabama

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## **Law Enforcement Across North Alabama Taking Back Unwanted Prescription Drugs on Saturday**

*Ridding Home of Unused Drugs Discourages Abuse and Addiction*

**BIRMINGHAM** -- U.S. Attorney Joyce White Vance, DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge Clay A. Morris and law enforcement across north Alabama are asking residents to take advantage of DEA's 10th Prescription Drug Take-Back Day this Saturday to dispose of unused prescription drugs properly and without damage to the environment.

It is critical to get unused, unwanted and expired prescription drugs out of family medicine cabinets before they can fall into the hands of children and others who might use them to fuel addiction. This year, along with the take-back sites at community locations across north Alabama, the U.S. Attorney's Office will provide new drug-neutralizing pouches that will be given out at some of the take-back sites for people to try at home.

The patented Deterra Drug Deactivation System neutralizes prescription drugs poured into the foil pouches that contain a proprietary activated carbon, rendering the drugs ineffective for misuse and safe for the environment, according to Deterra's manufacturer, Minneapolis-based Verde Technologies.

"We live in a state with one of the nation's highest per capita rates of opioid painkiller prescriptions," Vance said. "It is a fact that there is a strong link between prescription painkiller abuse and heroin use and, sadly, many addicts get their first dose from a family member's medicine cabinet," she said.

"Cultivating a habit of removing unused prescriptions from our homes is a vital step in curtailing easy access," Vance said. "DEA's nine previous Take-Back Days have cleared tons of prescription drugs from our neighborhoods. With the new drug-neutralizing pouches we are introducing, individuals could have a safe and effective means to dispose of unwanted pharmaceuticals at home, year-round."

"Prescription drug abuse continues to be a problem in Alabama," Morris said. "Parents should talk to their children about the dangers of taking prescription medication not prescribed to them and help reduce the threat of drug abuse, theft, and accidental overdoses. Please take this opportunity to clean out your medicine cabinet and keep your loved ones safe and healthy," he said.

DEA and local law enforcement will operate take-back sites from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. For the 10th time in five years, through a national Prescription Drug Take-Back Day, DEA is offering the public a convenient way to prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs.

Sites abound across north Alabama. The Birmingham Police Department will take back prescription drugs at each of its four precincts. The Blount County District Attorney's Office is operating at least six sites at pharmacies throughout the county. Police and sheriff's departments throughout the Greater Birmingham Metro Area and beyond are participating. Exact collection sites can be found by zip code, state or city at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/).

DEA cannot accept liquids, needles or sharps, only pills or patches. The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked.

Last September, Americans turned in 309 tons -- more than 617,000 pounds -- of prescription drugs at nearly 5,500 sites operated by the DEA and more than 4,000 of its state and local law-enforcement partners. When those results are combined with what was collected in its eight previous Take Back events, DEA and its partners have taken in more than 2,400 tons, or 4.8 million pounds, of pills.

This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health issue. Medicines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. are alarmingly high, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses due to these drugs. Studies show that the majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet. In addition, Americans now are advised that their usual methods for disposing of unused medicines — flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash — pose potential safety and health hazards.

For more information about the disposal of prescription drugs or about the September 26 Take Back Day event, go to the [DEA Office of Diversion Control site](#).

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