

Annual Report by the Director

2000 Reporting Period

Synopsis

Pharmaceutical products are a small but important component of the waste stream with implications to virtually every household in British Columbia. Unused medications can pose a significant health, safety and environmental hazard when improperly stored in the home or disposed to the environment.

Pharmaceutical brand-owners voluntarily established a stewardship program to collect and manage unused consumer medications in November, 1996. At that time, the industry also requested that the province expand the scope of the Post-Consumer Residuals Stewardship Program Regulation (BC Reg.111/97) to include pharmaceutical products in order to ensure a level playing field for all producers through universal participation in the program. The regulation, passed on March 27, 1997, requires all brand-owners of prescription and non-prescription medications and vitamin and mineral supplements sold in BC to take cradle-to-grave responsibility for the safe management of residuals of these products which would otherwise enter the household special waste stream.

Performance

For the period April, 2000 to December, 2000, industry reports that over 550 retail pharmacy outlets, representing over 75% of all pharmacies in British Columbia, accepted unused and expired medications from consumers. Industry indicates that the number of participating pharmacies is anticipated to increase as the new program management agency continues to heighten awareness of the program among British Columbia pharmacists.

The program was re-launched in March, 2001, as the Medications Return Program

For the nine month period April, 2000 to December, 2000, the program reports the collection of 4490.1 kg for a four year program total of 32,776 kg. The program will be reporting on a calendar year basis for the year 2001 and onward. Given the nature of these wastes, incineration is the accepted best management practice for residual medications collected by the program.

Over this reporting period, residual pharmaceuticals were transported by licensed transporters to special waste treatment facilities in Alberta.

Program Funding

Brand-owners are not permitted under the regulation to charge any fees to return regulated product residuals to ensure consumers are not discouraged from properly disposing their waste medicines. The pharmaceutical industry has chosen to fund the program directly and no fees are assessed to consumers at the point of sale.

New Developments

A revised stewardship plan was submitted by the not-for-profit Post-Consumer Pharmaceutical Stewardship Association (PCPSA) in December, 2000. Under the revised plan, the program was re-launched in March, 2001, as the Medications Return Program with a

The number of pharmacy return locations has increased since the program re-launch

renewed communications plan to enhance awareness of the program among health professionals and consumers.

The ministry will closely monitor program performance following the re-launch to determine if enhanced communications efforts may be required to ensure consumers are aware of their options to dispose of unused and expired medications.

Since March, 2000, Residuals Management Group Ltd. of Surrey, BC, has assumed the program's day to day operations on behalf of the PCPSA.

Further Information

[RCBC Recycling Hotline of BC](#) Greater Vancouver (604) 732-9253 (R-E-C-Y-C-L-E)
Outside Greater Vancouver 1-800-667-4321

For further information regarding the Post-Consumer Residual Stewardship Program Regulation, refer to the ministry's website.

Ron Driedger, P. Eng.,
Director, Pollution Prevention and Remediation Branch