



PRESS RELEASE

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## COUNTY OF SONOMA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Board of Supervisors Proceeds with Safe Medicine Disposal *Ordinance to Include Sharps & Standards for Take Back Sites***

**SANTA ROSA, CA.** – At their September 12, 2017, meeting, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, also serving as the Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors, provided direction to staff to return later this fall with a countywide Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance that includes sharps and minimum standards for take back sites. The Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance places the responsibility on the producers and manufacturers for funding the safe disposal of their products. Similar disposal laws apply to items such as paints, mattresses, and products containing mercury.

“The safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste, including sharps that administer medicine, helps protect public health and the environment,” stated Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Water Agency Chairwoman Shirlee Zane. “This ordinance will improve universal access to medication disposal and result in costs savings to residents and benefits to the environment.” Currently, take back sites are supported and funded by local ratepayer sewer fees and government agency budgets. Since 2007, local agencies in Sonoma County have collected over 100,000 pounds of unused medications.

The inclusion of sharps is consistent with what some of the other jurisdictions in California have included in their ordinances. Sharps include hypodermic needles, pen needles, intravenous needles, lancets, and other devices that are used to penetrate the skin for the delivery of medications used in the care of people and animals. Residents often face a challenge to properly dispose of their sharps due to fees or the lack of locations. With this ordinance, residents will have a safe way to dispose of their sharps.

The Board also directed staff to include robust standards for take back sites throughout Sonoma County. The standards under development requires a collection site in each city and unincorporated community plus an additional site per 20,000 residents. The ordinance would also require a mail-back option be available for all residents. The

expansion of take back sites throughout Sonoma County will enable residents to dispose of their medicine or sharps safely and conveniently.

The proposed ordinance will be developed by the Sonoma County Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance Collaborative. The Collaborative is composed of members from the Russian River Watershed Association, Sonoma County Water Agency, County of Sonoma, Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, and the cities of Santa Rosa and Petaluma.

To learn more about the current voluntary Safe Medicine Disposal Program, please visit <http://www.safemedicinedisposal.org>.

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The County of Sonoma is comprised of 27 departments and agencies that provide a full range of services to the community. It encompasses over 1,600 square miles and is home to 502,000 residents. Sonoma County government has a history of providing excellent and responsive public service while operating under sound fiscal principles.

Located less than one hour north of San Francisco, Sonoma County combines in one location the beautiful Pacific coastline, award-winning wineries, majestic redwoods, historic towns, fine dining, and a wide variety of entertainment and cultural activities.