

## Need to Know



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# California Signs Drug, Needle Take-back Program into Law

The program will provide safe and convenient disposal options for both home-generated pharmaceutical drugs and sharps waste.

Waste360 Staff | Oct 02, 2018

California Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law SB 212, which establishes a comprehensive statewide take-back system for sharps and medications.

California is first in the nation to establish a comprehensive, producer-funded take-back program to provide safe and convenient disposal options for both home-generated pharmaceutical drugs and sharps waste.

**Related:** California Sharps and Drug Takeback Bill Inches Toward Governor's Desk

“The California Product Stewardship Council has worked tirelessly for the last eight years to get the pharmaceutical industry to work with us to put in place a statewide take-back program,” said Heidi Sanborn, senior advisor and former executive director of the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC), in a statement. “It took passing 10 county and three city

ordinances and the hard work of Senator Jackson and Assemblymembers' Ting and Gray, as well as many others, to successfully negotiate a compromise with the medical industry to make this happen. This is a public

health and safety bill whose time has come, and we are sincerely grateful to the legislature and Governor Brown for making Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) the law.”

SB 212 addresses the myriad of problems that exist due to the lack of a statewide system to manage these products at the end of their useful life. Because of this bill, manufacturers of sharps, prescriptions and over-the-counter medications will be required to create, fund and participate in a statewide take-back system. Now, California residents can address important public health concerns by having access to safe, convenient disposal methods of sharps and drugs.

CalRecycle estimates 936 million sharps are used by consumers in California each year, approximately 31 percent of those are thrown in the trash. A study by University Mass Lowell in 2015 estimated 7 percent of needles are flushed, and needlestick injuries occur with unacceptable frequency. Improper disposal of sharps poses an unacceptable risk to many Californians, and the statewide sharps collection program contained in SB 212 will significantly reduce that risk. Another study recently completed by the Environmental Research & Education Foundation in 2018 found that 4 percent of materials recovery facility workers are stuck by needles each year while doing their job.

Similarly, prescription and over-the-counter medications present significant problems when leftover if not properly secured and disposed of. Leftover drugs and a lack of safe and convenient disposal options are fuel to the opioid epidemic and increase instances of accidental poisonings and can cause environmental harm.

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