

# Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Guard members assist with Drug Take Back Day Initiative

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WAUKESHA, Wis. – Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen supported the Wisconsin Department of Justice Prescription Drug Take Back Initiative this past week, consolidating tens of thousands of pounds of unused medications to be safely disposed.

Members of the Wisconsin National Guard's Counterdrug Program helped facilitate take back efforts in communities across Wisconsin Apr. 30 and then helped drug and law enforcement agencies consolidate the medications in Waukesha May 2 to prepare them for proper disposal.

Wisconsin has been participating in Drug Take Back Day since May of 2015. Wisconsin's participation is part of the Drug Enforcement Agency National Prescription Drug Take Back Day which began in 2010. The event takes place twice a year, typically on the last Saturday in April and October.

"To date since 2015 we have collected and disposed of 801,932 pounds of drugs in the state of Wisconsin," said Danielle Long, the Department of Justice's opioid initiatives advisor. That number doesn't include the drugs collected during this past weekend's Drug Take Back Day event.

Last Fall, Wisconsin was number one in the country in the volume of prescription medications collected. Col. Paul Felician, director of the Wisconsin National Guard's Counterdrug Program, said one of the reasons Wisconsin is so successful in the Drug Take Back Day Initiative is the partnerships with other agencies throughout the state.

“To be a partner in this is to truly fulfill our mission as Guardsmen,” Felician said. “It is to be in our communities to help in any way that we can.”

While the Wisconsin National Guard’s federal mission is to act as the primary combat reserve of the Army and Air Force, its domestic mission is to support civil authorities here at home.

“We are your neighbors, we are your family members, and we work in your businesses, and it is an honor to be a partner in this effort,” Felician said.

Spc. Yousif Mahmoud has been working with the Counterdrug program since last October. This was the second Drug Take Back initiative in which he participated.

“It’s a good program to participate in,” Mahmoud said. “You’re saving lives. You’re preventing all those drugs from being exposed all over the place. It’s always nice to help.”

Airman 1st Class James Iwen was surprised by how many drugs were collected by communities throughout the state. In his role with the Counterdrug Program, he is able to work alongside many partners.

“I work with a lot of different agencies almost every single day,” Iwen said. “I like that there’s a lot of initiatives that people are actually communicating and trying to work together to solve the bigger issue.”

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul thanked the many partner agencies throughout the state that made Drug Take Back Day a success, including 268 law enforcement agencies that participated and community members who brought in their unused and unwanted medications.

“By safely disposing of those medications, you can help prevent them from being diverted or stolen or otherwise misused and contributing to addiction,” Kaul said. “It’s a simple task. It just takes a few minutes. By doing it, you can help make your communities safer. Safely disposing of unused and unwanted medication also helps keep our water clean.”

Waukesha County Sheriff Eric Severson echoed Kaul’s praise for Wisconsin’s citizens.

“Wisconsin cares about its families and its communities and its natural resources,

and it's because of that that we get such an overwhelming response when it comes to these drug take-backs," Severson said.

Anyone who missed Drug Take Back Day can still discard their unused and unwanted medications at one of the nearly 500 permanent drug drop boxes throughout the state at law enforcement agencies, hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies. To find a drop box location near you, go to <https://doseofrealitywi.gov>.