



# NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD CASE STUDY

**Monroe County Department of Environmental Services** - *Honored for being a leader in reducing and properly disposing of household pharmaceutical waste.*

## SUMMARY

Monroe County, awarded in 2009, took the lead in facilitating the proper collection and disposal of household pharmaceutical waste. A developing issue at the time of the award was the detection of pharmaceuticals in United States' waterways. Monroe County addressed the issue by reducing the amount of pharmaceuticals being thrown away by households. Monroe County Department of Environmental Services' established a successful, sustainable and cost-effective household pharmaceutical waste collection program. The county also developed an innovative and comprehensive guide for how to plan successful pharmaceutical waste collection events.



## BENEFITS

In spring 2008, Monroe County Department of Environmental Services held the first pharmaceutical waste collection event in upstate/central New York. More than 42,000 pills were taken out of the waste stream and properly disposed of. They county held additional collection events at which they collected nearly 130 pounds of hazardous substances, 3,730 pounds of non-hazardous substances and 315 pounds of controlled substances. Collecting and properly disposing of pharmaceutical waste reduces the amount of pollutants introduced into the environment and helps prevent possible misuse.

## KEY METRICS

- 42,000 pills of medical waste were collected during the first event
- 128 pounds of hazardous substances collected
- 3,727 pounds of non-hazardous substances collected
- 314 pounds of controlled substances collected

## ABOUT MONROE COUNTY DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

- Enhances the environment
- Preserves natural resources
- Protects the public's health

***NYS Environmental Excellence Award:*** Annual recognition of outstanding innovative and sustainable projects or programs and unique partnerships that are improving and protecting New York State's environmental resources and contributing to a stronger economy

## A MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

- First to spearhead a pharmaceutical waste collection event in upstate or central New York and assisted other municipalities in doing the same
- Collection events reduce environmental impacts and help prevent possible misuse of unwanted pharmaceuticals
- Guidebook outlines plans and procedures for holding collection events
- Successful partnerships with surrounding counties, law enforcement, pharmaceutical associations, disposal companies and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

## HIGHLIGHTS

To reduce potential sources of environmental contamination and enhance public safety, Monroe County Department of Environmental Services organized pharmaceutical waste collections to provide residents with a safe and proper way to dispose of their unused or unwanted medications free-of-charge. Pharmaceuticals collected include, but are not limited to, prescription and over-the-counter medications, veterinary medications and nutritional supplements.

Based on their successes, Monroe County produced a guidebook that outlines plans and procedures for collection events, checklists of needed materials, event preparations and advertising samples. This innovative tool has been shared with municipalities and agencies throughout New York State.

Monroe County took a leadership role in a workgroup of representatives from 15 municipal governments, law enforcement, pharmaceutical associations, disposal companies and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. This group worked diligently to raise public awareness, draft new state legislation and help organize additional collection events.

The economic and social benefits of this program are immeasurable. Collecting and properly disposing of pharmaceutical waste reduces the amount of pollutants introduced into the environment and helps prevent possible misuse.

## FUNDING

Primary funding for the initial pharmaceutical waste collections was provided through a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Monroe County also secured a no-fee disposal arrangement with a local disposal facility.