

Group asks companies to pay for medicine disposal

July 30 -- An association representing the nation's county governments is asking pharmaceutical companies to bear the financial responsibility for disposing of unwanted medicines.

The National Association of Counties adopted a policy July 28 supporting producer responsibility for unwanted medicines. The counties would like the pharmaceutical industry to shoulder the expense of taking back prescription and over-the-counter drugs without relying on state or local government funding.

Leftover medicine may play a part in drug abuse and accidental poisonings, while disposing of the medicines contributes to ground and surface water contamination, according to the association.

The group points to a successful program in British Columbia in which pharmaceutical companies paid \$315,000 in 2008 to take back unused prescriptions.

"Like Europe and Canada, the United States can develop programs to cover the costs of collecting, transporting and disposing of these medicines. It's imperative we do so," said Bill Sheehan, executive director of the Product Policy Institute, which helped the association of counties develop the resolution.

The National Association of Counties this year also readopted previous resolutions on producer responsibility for paint, electronics and mercury containing lamps.

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