

New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Warns Consumers to Check Prescription Medications That May Have Been Affected by Temperature Changes Due To Hurricane Sandy

NEWARK – Attorney General Jeffrey S. Chiesa and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today advised consumers to check certain prescription medications that may have been affected by temperature changes, due to power outages caused by Hurricane Sandy.

“Through the State Board of Pharmacy, we have notified all pharmacists in New Jersey of the need to dispose of any temperature-sensitive medications that may have lost their effectiveness during blackouts caused by Hurricane Sandy,” Attorney General Chiesa said. “We are extending the same warning to consumers. If you have concerns about any prescription medication in your home, talk with your doctor or pharmacist. Replace any medications that were exposed to temperatures beyond those recommended by the manufacturer.”

The warning does not apply to most medications that are commonly kept in home medicine cabinets. But it does apply to certain medications that are sensitive to temperature changes – especially those that must be relied upon to potentially save the patient’s life during an emergency.

Examples include:

- Epinephrine injectors. These spring-loaded injectors are kept by patients and used on an emergency basis, at the onset of allergic reactions, to treat anaphylactic shock. Certain products must be stored at room temperature, and should be replaced if exposed to prolonged cold or heat.
- Nitroglycerin sublingual tablets. These tablets are used to treat or prevent extreme chest pain due to coronary artery disease. They must be stored at room temperature, and should be replaced if exposed to prolonged temperature changes.

Attorney General Chiesa and Eric T. Kanefsky, Acting Director of the State Division of Consumer Affairs, offered the following advice for consumers:

- Check the package your prescription medication came in, to learn whether the medication is sensitive to prolonged or extreme changes in temperature.
- If you have concerns about any specific medication and are not sure whether it is sensitive to temperature changes that may have occurred in your home, contact your pharmacist.
- If any medications in your home were exposed to conditions that can weaken their effectiveness, discard and replace them. Contact your pharmacist and let them know you will need a refill or replacement. If necessary, contact your physician for a new prescription or refill.

“This warning is especially important for consumers who rely on emergency medications. Take the time to check those medicines now, to make sure they will be fully effective when you need

them,” Acting Director Kanefsky said. “Do not hesitate to replace any medicines that may have been compromised. Your health and your life may depend on this simple decision.”

Attorney General Chiesa reminded consumers that unused medications should not be placed in the trash or flushed into the water supply. Project Medicine Drop, an initiative of the Division of Consumer Affairs, enables New Jerseyans to safely and securely dispose of unused prescription medications 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at participating police departments.

There are a total of 27 Project Medicine Drop locations statewide, including at least one in each county; and more will be added in early 2013. Consumers can find their nearest Project Medicine Drop location, and other information on disposing of unused medications, by visiting www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov/meddrop.

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