

Pharmacy Crime Watch

Wisconsin Crime Alert Network would communicate information about pharmacy burglaries and robberies statewide

by J.B. Van Hollen, Wisconsin Attorney General

Unauthorized use and distribution of prescription drugs is a significant part of Wisconsin's illegal drug trade. Many pharmacies are the victims of theft or robbery as perpetrators, users and dealers jump from pharmacy to pharmacy and community to community in search of prescription drugs. Pharmacy theft exposes employees to physical danger, costs businesses inventory and can ultimately reduce business.

Businesses want to be aware of criminal activity, to help protect their employees, their businesses and their communities. If the next pharmacy to be hit has a description of a suspect and the suspect's vehicle, it will know what to be on the lookout for and report unusual activity to police before it becomes the next victim.

To take advantage of modern technology and get businesses information about criminal activity in real time, I developed a new program called the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network. The network is a fax and e-mail system that provides local law enforcement agencies the ability to quickly alert businesses, including pharmacies, about a crime trend or a suspect in their communities. The alert can be tailored to specific types of businesses and geographic regions in order to provide the most useful information to those who are most likely affected by that crime and those who have information that could lead to the arrest of a suspect or the safe recovery of a missing child.

I first discovered the Crime Alert Network in Minnesota where it has been in existence for over a decade. Last July, an Amber Alert was sent across the airwaves in the hopes of recovering four Wisconsin children who had been abducted and were believed to be taken north. In Minnesota, the alert was carried over a Crime Alert

Network very similar to the one I have developed. A hotel in rural Minnesota that was part of the Network received the alert and taped it to its front desk. A short time later, the suspect walked into the hotel and checked into his room. The hotel staff on duty contacted law enforcement and

the children were recovered and returned safely to their family.

The possibilities of what the Network could accomplish are unlimited. Giving law enforcement additional eyes and ears on the streets will not only reduce crime, but also aid in the apprehension of criminals and the location of missing persons by providing a fast, cost-effective means of communication between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve.

The Wisconsin Crime Alert Network has the broad support of the business community and the law enforcement community. Legislation is needed, however, for me to implement it.

The good news is that Assembly mem-
continued on page 29

First-hand Account: Armed Robbery in Mt. Horeb

by Karen Roby, RPh, Mt. Horeb Pharmacy



Mount Horeb is a quaint, quiet community located about 15 miles southwest of Madison. It is not a place where you would ever expect an armed robbery to occur. The Mount Horeb Pharmacy is located on Main St., across the street from a bank and the fire station and within a few blocks of the police station.

The robbery at our pharmacy occurred on a Wednesday morning during broad daylight at about 11 a.m. There were five employees, including myself, and one customer with an infant in the store at the time. A man entered the store and immediately took the front phone off the hook. He was dressed all in black and in a black ski mask that covered everything but his eyes. He was about 5'6"-5'8", slight build, light colored eyes, in his 20s and very intoxicated. He continued to make his way to the back of the store where the pharmacy is located. On his way he confronted the customer with the baby and held a gun to her. He forced her in the back pharmacy area. I was with the rest of the employees in the pharmacy area. Unfortunately, I did not see him until he was about 10 feet away from me. He stated that he meant business, it was a robbery, and this was not a joke, the gun was real. He held the gun in his right hand and raised it up and pointed it at us as he ordered us to get down on the floor.

He singled me out, and asked me to give him all of the Oxycontin and morphine. He handed me a ripped up plastic bag to put the medications in. I unlocked the narcotic cabinets and gave him what he asked for. He was never violent and apologized more than once that he was upsetting us. However, he always had the gun in plain view or pointed at us. After I gave him what he asked for, he left with no further incident. We stayed down until he was out of the pharmacy and then immediately called the Mt. Horeb Police Department.

We did notify some of the nearby pharmacies about the robbery after we called the police. Unfortunately, the Corner Drug in Dodgeville wasn't one of the pharmacies we called. They were robbed by what is believed to be the same man less than 30 minutes later. I believe the robber was much more confrontational there, and they also had a few more customers in the store who were put in danger. If there had been some sort of networking system to notify nearby law enforcement and pharmacies that the robbery at Mt. Horeb had occurred, it is possible the robbery at Corner Drug could have been avoided. These types of robberies are on the rise all over the country, and small towns in Wisconsin are not immune. Any type of system we can have in place to notify pharmacies and police that someone dangerous is out there will only heighten awareness. In cases like this, the more information we have as quick as possible can only be beneficial. ●