



**Snohomish County**  
**County Executive's Office**

*For immediate release – Monday, April 18, 2005*

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## Reardon hails decision by Target stores to restrict access to key meth ingredient

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*Minneapolis-based company acknowledges Snohomish County Executive's role in voluntarily removing pseudoephedrine-based cold medications*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today called the Target Corp.'s decision to voluntarily restrict pseudoephedrine-based cold medicines a significant victory, one that will convince other retailers to join his anti-methamphetamine campaign.

"This is a big step in our fight to stop meth at the source – before it hits our neighborhood streets," said Executive Reardon. "I am very pleased that Target has chosen to be a good neighbor in Snohomish County and help eliminate this threat to our community."

When Target announced its policy change, Executive Reardon was in Washington, D.C., where he was meeting with Washington state Congressional delegation members on several issues, including more federal funding for the methamphetamine fight.

Target operates 1,330 stores in 47 states and is the nation's second largest discount retailer after Wal-Mart.

Local Target officials said the company is eager to make the policy change work.

"This is the right thing to do for the communities in which we serve," said Chris Eilitz, the company's District Team Leader in Northwest Washington. "Partnering with Executive Reardon on this issue is going to help keep our neighborhoods safe. This is exciting."

Pseudoephedrine is the key ingredient needed to manufacture methamphetamine.

Executive Reardon first called on retailers to voluntarily restrict access to pseudoephedrine-based cold medicines in his State of the County address Wednesday, March 9. The County Executive decided to launch the campaign after a ride-along with Lynnwood Police Officer T.J. Brooks, who alerted him to the prevalence of “smurfing.”

Smurfing is street slang describing how criminals move from store to store buying up pseudoephedrine-based products.

Executive Reardon said, “I told T.J. I wanted to stand up to retailers who indiscriminately sell products used to make meth and ask them to do the right thing by our citizens.”

Target had been a concern of anti-drug activists – both locally and across the nation - who unsuccessfully lobbied the discount retailer to put cold medicines with pseudoephedrine under lock and key. Instead, the company put a two-package-per-customer limit on sales, a decision that smurfers circumvented by moving from store to store. Late last month, Reardon said pointedly that retailers had an obligation to help Snohomish County control its meth problem and that he would personally boycott businesses that did not voluntarily limit access to pseudoephedrine-based products.

Executive Reardon has been working closely with representatives of the Washington Retail Association, a statewide organization that represents pharmacies, to bring retailers into his campaign.

“This is a good sign that the retailers are starting to take steps to control meth use through voluntary efforts like those proposed by Executive Reardon,” said Jan Teague, president and CEO of the Washington Retail Association. “We appreciate his leadership on this issue.”

Target stores nationwide will pull many cold, allergy and cough remedies from their regular shelves and sell them only from pharmacy counters, the company announced today. The restrictions apply to all over-the-counter drugs containing pseudoephedrine, including children's medicines, tablets, liquids and gel-caps.

The products will not be sold at all by about 300 Target stores that don't have pharmacies.

Methamphetamine continues to take a steep toll on Snohomish County – both on citizens who use the highly addictive psychoactive drug and their children, and to local governments and schools overwhelmed by criminal activity associated with meth.

A recent study found that 70 percent of criminal cases in the County court system were drug related and that 35 percent were methamphetamine related. Results from a jail study revealed that among 500 Snohomish County arrestees tested for drugs, more than 73 percent tested positive for some illegal substance. Nearly 20 percent of those tested positive for methamphetamine.

Meth labs are also a serious Snohomish County problem: 321 labs were shut down by local law enforcement agencies between 2001 and 2004, including 51 last year.

The cost of methamphetamine use courses through local government. Increased law enforcement costs to deal with street crime, neighborhood drug houses, dealers, prosecution, court costs, incarceration, hazardous waste cleanup, the care of dependent children of addicts, and health and social impacts draw resources and tax dollars from other public programs.

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