



**Press Event: *Prescribed to Death Memorial***

April 11, 2018, 12:30pm ET

The Ellipse in President's Park – Washington, D.C.

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*Deborah A.P. Hersman, NSC President and CEO remarks:*

Good Afternoon.

Thank you for joining us in President's Park as we open Prescribed to Death – A Memorial to the Victims of the Opioid Crisis. We have been to Chicago, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and now we are here in the nation's capital.

We are grateful to Secretary Zinke and the National Park Service for hosting the memorial. Thank you to Secretary Azar for your department's leadership on this issue, and to Ms. Conway and the Office of the President for raising the dialogue around the greatest public health crisis of our time.

Here in Washington D.C., people come together to celebrate elections, to negotiate agreements, to testify in support of new laws, and to march for change. The cornerstone of our nation is our willingness to come together to make things better.

Opioids have decimated communities across the country.

This is not a federal or state issue.

This is not a red state or a blue state issue.

This is a human crisis that knows no race, age or gender, and it demands bipartisan solutions and national leadership.

We are here because the National Safety Council has a century-long history of working with individuals, organizations, business leaders and federal agencies that share our mission to eliminate preventable deaths.

We have 14,000 member companies in over 50,000 locations and we continue a tradition of keeping people safe wherever they are.

75% of those affected by opioids are in the U.S. workforce (NORC), and substance use issues affect 7 out of 10 employers (NSC Survey data). The business impact of opioids in the workplace is much higher than most people realize.

We have worked with the Chamber of Commerce to address this growing epidemic and created free tools for employers – many of whom are facing absenteeism, productivity issues, and even finding enough qualified workers.

Our Substance Abuse Cost Calculator lets employers estimate associated costs based on workforce size, industry and location, (pause) and employer toolkits help define best practices in the workplace.

However today, people are nine times more likely to be killed or injured off the job than on the job, so our efforts extend beyond workplaces.

Last week at the National Rx Summit we unveiled the third edition of our Prescription Nation report (HOLD UP REPORT), grading states on actions they are taking to address the opioid crisis.

And right down Pennsylvania Avenue, Congress is currently debating legislation in both the House and Senate to address the epidemic.

To save the most lives, the National Safety Council urges lawmakers to require the following five actions:

- Prescriber education on the risks and safe use of opioids
- Prescribing guidelines based on CDC best practices
- The use of prescription drug monitoring programs
- Increased access and funding for naloxone and effective treatment
- And improved data collection around overdose survivals and deaths

It is imperative that new laws be accompanied by public education to address the stigma surrounding addiction.

With this Memorial, we are putting a face on the opioid epidemic to educate and empower the public.

Despite national headlines, we've found one third of opioid users do not realize their medication is an opioid drug. People assume it is safe if a doctor prescribes it.

The Memorial and our Stop Everyday Killers campaign encourages people to do two things:

The first thing is talk with your doctor or pharmacist about the risks of opioids. We created free 'Warn Me' labels so the public and practitioners can have a conversation about the risks and alternatives to opioids.

Even as an educated, safety-minded mom I could have used an opioid 'Warn Me' label.

My son Taylor is 17 and had wisdom tooth surgery last year. Among the post-op instructions and materials, he received a six-day prescription for tramadol. Neither the doctor's assistant who handed me the script, or the clerk in the pharmacy that filled it, could tell me if it was an opioid drug.

Both said no when I asked. Only the pharmacy manager acknowledged that yes, tramadol is an opioid.

This warn me label (HOLD UP CARD) would have prepared me for that conversation and it would have prepared the providers to have that conversation with me.

The second thing we want everyone to do is clean out your medicine cabinets. We know 64 percent of users don't get their pills from a valid prescription (SAMHSA, National Survey on Drug Use and Health.)

Many obtain them from friends or family, so removing pills from circulation is crucial. We partnered with Stericycle to provide postage paid Seal & Send envelopes for proper disposal of unused medications.

I have three teenage boys at home. I used the Stericycle Seal & Send envelope (HOLD UP ENVELOPE) to get unused medications out of my home and we encourage everyone to do the same.

Both the envelopes and warn me labels are available for free at **[NSC.org/TakeAction](https://www.nsc.org/TakeAction)**

It is not just about getting the pills out of your home, but also making sure they do not end up in our landfills or water supplies.

Secretary Zinke is very close to the public lands, and I count myself and my family among those who derive great joy from our national parks and open spaces. The *Healthy Parks Healthy People* program highlights the important role that public lands play in promoting our national wellbeing.

With that, it is my pleasure to welcome Secretary Zinke.