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## Emergency drug for treating opioid overdose comes to Wiregrass first responders

Lance Griffin May 22, 2018



Jamey Durham of the Alabama Department of Health watches as a Henry County Sheriff's deputy packs up a box of anti-overdose drugs for the department following a training session at the Dothan Opera House on Tuesday

JAY HARE/ DOTHAN EAGLE

Another lifesaving tool is in the hands of area first responders.

A partnership between the Alabama Department of Public Health and pharmaceutical company Kaleo will allow all first responder vehicles in Alabama to be equipped with Naloxone, an emergency medicine injector used to reverse the life-threatening effects of a known or suspected overdose of narcotics.

Kaleo committed to providing 872 boxes of the medication (under the Kaleo brand name of Evzio), one for every known first responder vehicle in Alabama. Distributions of the medicine were made in Dothan Tuesday.

"It is not often you get something like this that doesn't cost the state a penny," said State Sen. Gerald Dial, R-Lineville, who contacted Kaleo after seeing a news story about the company donating the injectors to first responders in Maryland.

Leaders of volunteer rescue squads as well as municipal departments sat through a brief training video Tuesday. Those present were asked to train all first responders in their

department. Use of the injector, however, is simple. The medicine and injection needle are encased in a plastic container. First responders must simply place the medicine against the patient's outer thigh and press down on the container to release the medicine. Each box contains two doses in case the patient does not respond to the first dose.

Distributions have been taking place across Alabama in May, and the medicine has already been used on three occasions, Dial said.

"We've handed out over 500 of these in less than a month and we have already seen three lives saved," Dial said.

First responders must send an email to the Alabama Department of Public Health when the injectors are used. The email simply states the injector was used and includes the patient outcome, but does not provide any personal information about the patient. Upon receiving the email, the first responder unit will be provided with another injector.

"This is not a solution to the opioid epidemic," Dial said. "But this is a second chance for some."

Kaleo's commitment is expected to last three years. The availability of Naloxone for first responders is unknown beyond that. The price for a box of Evzio for a government agency is about \$360.

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Lance Griffin

Lover of sweet tea, fried okra and the Boston Red Sox.

