FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DEA Suspends Lakeland Branch of Drug Company From Distributing Controlled Substances

DEC 11 -- Mark R. Trouville, Special Agent in Charge of the Miami Field Division Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) today announced the Immediate Suspension of the Federal Controlled Substance Registration of the Lakeland distribution center of Cardinal Health.

The company's Lakeland branch, located at 2045 Interstate Drive, Lakeland, Florida has been the subject of a DEA investigation that alleges that this distribution center sold large quantities of controlled substances to rogue Internet pharmacies. This investigation has revealed that several of their largest purchasers of hydrocodone were pharmacies engaged in schemes to dispense controlled substances based on prescriptions that were written for other than legitimate medical purposes. In spite of being warned by DEA about the characteristics of rogue Internet pharmacies, this distribution center distributed over 8 million dosage units of hydrocodone products between August 2005 and October 2007, to rogue pharmacies.

"The Internet is now the main conduit in Florida through which prescription drugs are diverted for abuse. This phenomenon has brought the street pusher into the home and endangered our youth. Nearly 1 in 10 high school seniors admit to abusing powerful prescription painkillers," SAC Trouville said. "DEA is not only holding doctors and pharmacies accountable, but pharmaceutical distributors as well."

DEA's action suspends the DEA Certificate of Registration issued to the Lakeland branch of Cardinal Health in accordance with an Immediate Suspension Order and pursuant to Sections 303 and 304 of the Controlled Substances Act, Title 21, United States Code, Sections 823 and 824. The DEA's investigation has determined that the continued registration of Cardinal Health constitutes an imminent danger to public health and safety. This action only applies to the distribution of controlled substances at the Lakeland branch and not to other company products or facilities.

Cardinal Health's Lakeland office received written notice of the factual and legal basis for this action. In addition, they will be given an opportunity for an administrative hearing on April 9, 2008. After the hearing, the DEA Deputy Administrator will make a final decision on whether the DEA Certificate of Registration of Cardinal Health's Lakeland branch should be revoked. This decision will be published in the Federal Register.

Today, nearly seven million Americans are abusing prescription drugs—that is eighty percent more than just six years ago. If we look at the people who are just starting out as new drug users, prescription pain relievers have overtaken marijuana and cocaine as the drug of choice. Opioid painkillers now cause more drug overdose deaths than cocaine and heroin, combined.

This remains an on-going investigation. Please forward any questions to DEA Miami Field Division Public Information Officer Jeannette Moran at (305) 994-4837.