



Triad of
Kalamazoo
County

TRIAD NEWSLETTER

Safety for Older Adults

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Protect Yourself From Methamphetamine Drug Activity

Southwest Michigan is a hotbed for methamphetamine labs. According to the Kalamazoo Sheriff's Department there have been 1124 seizures of this drug since 2005. Journalist Cole Waterman, writing at MLIVE.com, reported that in 2015, Michigan ranked second in the country for meth-related incidents. Only Indiana had more meth incidents than Michigan.

These statistics should be of concern to all Michigan residents because meth labs are dangerous to the general public, not just to the addicts. The chemicals used to prepare meth are extremely hazardous, according to the Department of Justice's National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) at justice.gov. The ingredients are highly volatile and may explode causing fires, damaging neighboring homes and people who happen to be in the area. The Kalamazoo Environmental Health Department reports 1088 clean-ups since 2005.

Exposure to the chemicals used in meth preparation creates very serious health hazards. The physical effects range from red, burning eyes to chest pain to jaundice to decreased mental abilities to hallucinations, reports AEIDcon at aeideon.com. The additional problem is that meth contaminants remain in a building for years if it has not been properly decontaminated after the discovery of a meth lab. So, moving into a residence which is a former meth lab site could expose you to these health issues and more. According to the NDIC, just inhaling the gases from meth production can cause serious health issues because the gases are absorbed into the body through the lungs. The results can be pulmonary edema, nausea, intoxication, and chemical pneumonitis, which is inflammation of the lungs resulting from inhaling irritants.

Knowing the signs of a possible meth lab can help prevent some of the more serious consequences. One telltale sign is unusual odors such as ammonia or other chemical smells, says the NDIC. Excessive trash which contains coffee filters, red-stained cloths, and duct tape, is also a sign of a meth lab. In addition, the people occupying the apartment or home where the lab is located are very secretive, unfriendly, have lots of visitors at unusual times of the day, and post beware-of-dog signs.

What can you do if you suspect a meth lab is operating in your neighborhood or apartment building? First, and most importantly, do not try to investigate yourself, advises AEIDcon, because they say that "many laboratories are equipped with security devices or booby traps that could cause serious injuries or death." Instead, report your suspicions to the police department immediately. Also, when you're moving into a new home or apartment, it would be good idea to have it tested for meth contamination to be sure you're safe from the physical effects of meth residue, says AEIDcon. Condemnation and cleanup requirements of dwellings are incorporated in Article IX of the Kalamazoo County Sanitary Code to protect current and future residents from methamphetamine residue and hazardous chemical by-products from illegal methamphetamine production and/or use.

The bottom line is that to protect your health and safety, if you suspect a meth lab in your neighborhood, report it to the authorities. As the old adage says, "It's better to be safe than sorry."

What is Triad?

Formed in 1997, Triad of Kalamazoo County is a group of older adults, law-enforcement officers, and other concerned citizens working together to increase older adult safety and to allay their fears of crime.

Triad is a nationwide, senior safety initiative implemented on the county level.

You are invited to attend our next Triad council meeting.

Tues. July 11
9:30-10:30AM at
Senior Services.

Contact Triad Coordinator

Traci Furman

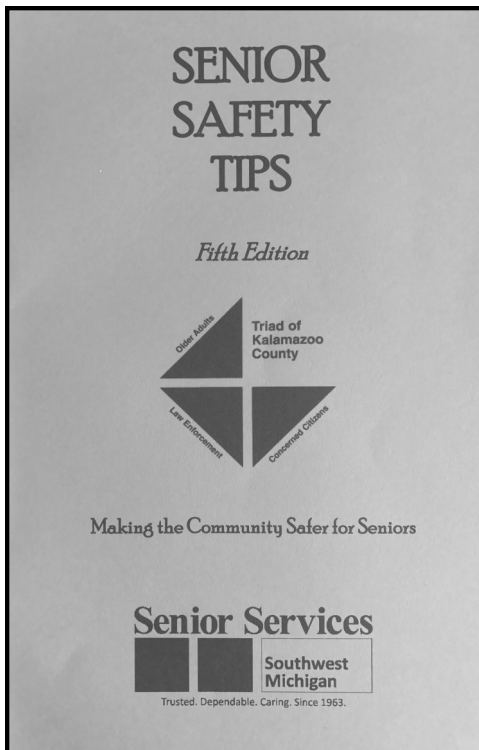
269-382-0515
ext.123

TFurman@seniorservices1.org

For questions, to schedule a speaker, or ask for copies of the Senior Safety Tips Booklet

Senior Services

Southwest
Michigan



The Triad Council is happy to announce the availability of the newest edition of the Senior Safety Tips Booklet

In the fifth edition of the Senior Safety Tips Booklet readers can find detailed information about a variety of safety issues that address current senior concerns. The booklet covers 22 topics and has a Kalamazoo County guide and safety reference directory. The new topics such as Dating Site Scams, Home Improvement Scams, Grandparent Scam and Hoarding have been added. The 50 page booklet is full of good information to educate yourself and to learn how to avoid crime. Kalamazoo seniors have been using the Senior Safety Tips since 1998.

You can pick up free copies at our office at 918 Jasper Street in Kalamazoo during business hours.

The Booklets are also available **on-line!** Go to www.SeniorServices1.org and view the fifth edition of the Triad Senior Safety Tips booklet.

For further information contact [Traci Furman](mailto:Traci.Furman@kalamazoo.org) at 269-382-0515 ext. 123.



Removing Social Security Numbers From Medicare ID Cards

To discourage identity theft Medicare is preparing to stop using Social Security numbers for identification. According to www.aarp.org, the agency plans to mail the new cards with Medicare beneficiary identifiers by April 2019. AARP's Fraud Watch Network ambassador, Frank Abagnale, advises consumers not to share Social Security numbers unnecessarily. "Before you get your new number, don't carry your Medicare card unless you are on your way to a health

care appointment," he wrote. "Instead, make a copy and black out all but the last four digits."

The Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015, requires the removal of Social Security Numbers from all Medicare cards by April 2019 specifically to address the problem of identity theft. A new Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI) number will replace the Social Security number on the new Medicare cards for Medicare transactions like billing, eligibility status, and claim status. Under the new system, for each person enrolled in Medicare, a new number will be assigned and a new card will be sent to you. The MBI is confidential and should be protected as personally identifiable information. By replacing the social security number on all Medicare cards, we can better protect private health care and financial information and Federal health care benefit and service payments.

There will be a transition period where you can use either the HICN or the MBI to exchange data with Medicare. The transition period will begin no earlier than April 1, 2018 and run through December 31, 2019.

The MBI will be clearly different than the HICN, with 11-characters in length and made up only of numbers and uppercase letters.

The MBI won't change Medicare benefits. People with Medicare may start using their new Medicare cards and MBIs as soon as they get them. Make sure to follow all identity theft precautions and if you think something is fishy get the information you need before you do anything with your new card and number. Contact CMS.gov (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services)