



# TRIAD NEWSLETTER

## Safety for Older Adults

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## Protect Your Home From Burglars



*By Phyllis Rose, RSVP Volunteer and Freelance Writer, Editor*

In Michigan last year, 77 percent of forced entry burglaries and 84 percent of nonforced entry burglaries were committed at a residence, according to Michigan Incident Crime Reporting at [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov). While incidents of both forced and nonforced entry burglaries have declined over the last few years, the news reports of those which do happen create fear, especially for seniors who may feel they are especially vulnerable.

But, seniors, you can be proactive by taking specific actions to reduce the likelihood you will be the victim of a burglary. The simplest thing is to be sure to lock all your doors and windows. Statistics show that most burglaries involving seniors occur because doors and windows are not locked. Garage doors should be closed and locked as well. Also, don't forget to install deadbolts on all doors. Next, never open your door automatically when someone rings the bell. Look through the peephole to see who is there. If you don't have a peephole, ask who is there or look through a window. If you do answer the door, be aware that some burglars work in teams to carry out what is known as a "distraction burglary." One member of the team lures a resident outside because there is supposedly some problem with a utility or a tree or whatever. Meanwhile, the other team member goes through the house, taking not only valuables, but also important papers which may leave you open to identity theft. When someone comes to the door and says he is from a utility company or other service, don't hesitate to ask for identification. Service people who are legitimate will gladly provide that information. Also, never let strangers into your home for any reason. If they need to make a call, offer to make the call for them, meanwhile leaving them outside and the door locked.

Develop relationships with your neighbors who will watch your house when you're gone and vice versa. If you're going to be gone for vacation, be sure to cancel newspapers, have your mail held by the post office, and have someone mow your lawn. Whether you're gone for an evening or a longer period of time, do whatever you can to make your home look occupied. Leave lights on inside the house when you're going out at night or use a timer to turn the lights on and off. In addition, consider a timer that will turn on the TV or radio, making potential thieves think someone is home. Also, close your curtains at night so burglars can't see into the house, determining what they want to steal. You may want to install an alarm system which will activate a siren, flash lights, and even dial authorities to let them know an intruder has been detected. If, even after doing all these things, you arrive home and suspect a thief may be inside your house, do not go in. Quietly leave and call 911. Seniors, you need not live in fear of burglary. Using some common sense and simple techniques can keep you, your family and possessions safe.

### Triad's Mission

To increase older adult safety and to allay their fears of crime.

### What is Triad?

Formed in 1997, Triad of Kalamazoo County is a group of older adults, law-enforcement officers, and other concerned citizens

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

### Meetings

You are welcome to attend Triad council meetings.

**Next meeting is  
Tues., Nov 11  
9:00-10:00am at  
Senior Services.**

### Speakers Bureau

Safety presentations available

To schedule a speaker or for information regarding Triad, contact the group's coordinator;

**Traci Furman  
269-382-0515 ext.123  
[TFurman@seniorservices1.org](mailto:TFurman@seniorservices1.org)**

### Senior Services



Southwest  
Michigan



# Don't Fall for Medical Alert Scam

*By Phyllis Rose, RSVP Volunteer and Freelance Writer, Editor*

Like many seniors, you live alone and worry about falling or having a medical emergency. You've seen the TV ads for medical alert systems and have thought about getting one.

Then one day, the phone rings and, surprise, someone has paid for you to receive a medical alert device, the robo-caller says. Just press 1 to talk to a representative and then pay the activation fee and a monthly monitoring fee. It would be so simple to press 1, but don't do it. As with many phone solicitations, this is a scam.

The Federal Trade Commission has warned seniors about this scam, noting the scammers lie, telling seniors they won't be charged until the device is activated, for example, but the charges start as soon as they agree to receive the device. The first clue this is a scam is they say the device was purchased for you by a friend or relative. If so, why didn't the friend or relative tell you, so when the call came, you would know it was legitimate?

According to Susan Tompor, writing in USA Today (June 9, 2013), if you ask who paid for the device, the caller will say he can't reveal that information.

Some scammers may also claim the monitoring is free as well. But think about it. Who is going to offer you a device and monitor for free? How can a company make money if they give their product and services away? So the call may be an attempt to get personal information such as your address, credit card numbers or Social Security number, leaving you vulnerable to identity theft, says Tompor. Some callers claim to be from a well-known insurance company or even Medicare, luring you into thinking they are legitimate. But this is also a lie. Other scammers send people the medical alert devices even when they have not ordered them and then bill the recipients, Tompor says.

According to the Better Business Bureau at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org), some 20 seniors who have fallen for the scam have been charged the monthly monitoring fee but have never received their "free" devices, or they have trouble returning it.

To avoid this scam, the Better Business Bureau suggests the following:

1. Don't fall for the "free" offer pitch. It isn't free when you have to pay fees for the system.
2. Don't fall for "scare tactics" designed to get you to sign up immediately.
3. Don't fall for the "limited time offer" tactic. Legitimate companies will give you time to think about it.
4. Don't fall for the claim that they are connected to Medicare or a well-known organization.
5. If you ask the caller questions and he refuses to give telephone numbers or addresses of the company, refuse to deal with him.

So, if you get one of these calls, hang up. Yes, you're afraid of falling, but don't add to the issue by falling for a telephone scam that robs you of your hard earned money. Check with a trusted family member or friend who can connect you with a legitimate medical alert company.



## Coffee with a Cop

Triad's first Coffee with a Cop program was held September 11, 2014. We had a total of 6 officers from Portage Police Department, Kalamazoo Public Safety and the Sheriff's Department. 18 seniors dropped by, grabbed a cup of coffee and got to know their local police officers. They came to ask questions, and to tell them about their concerns. The conversations were informal and informative for all. Thank you to everyone who participated.