

NATI NEWSWIRE

SENIOR SAFETY ISSUES

Falls Are a Serious Risk to Elders

More than 4,700 Americans age 65 and older die from falls each year? According to the [Home Safety Council](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org), (<http://www.homesafetycouncil.org>)

there are another 1.5 million non-fatal injuries from falling in the home every year.

That's the bad news. The good news is that there is a lot you can do to prevent falls.

Throw rugs are notorious skid hazards. Find a way to affix them permanently to the floor or, better, don't use them at all.

The **Bathroom** may be the most dangerous place in the house with water splashed on the floor and daily opportunities to fall when getting in and out of the tub or shower. Here are some precautions you can take:

- Use only bathmats with non-skid backing
- Install grab bars at levels to be used for both showers and tub baths. Towel bars are not appropriate for this use; they can easily break.
- Use a non-slip mat or attach non-slip strips to the floor of the tub.
- Wipe up water on the floor as soon as it appears
- Use nightlights in bathroom, halls and bedroom.

Stairs are another hazard that can be mitigated with good safety practices:

- Keep stairs clear of all clutter.
- Install bright lights at the top and bottom of stairs and at all landings.
- Install handrails on *both* sides of stairs and steps. Be sure they extend clear to the top and bottom of staircases
- Use rugs on stairs with care. They should be permanently affixed to the stairs.

Follow the same safety precautions for **outdoor stairs and steps** and have broken or chipped steps and walkways repaired as soon as possible.

Balance can become an issue with elders. Some medications or combinations of medications can contribute to dizziness and falls, so check with your physician if this is a problem for you.

Regular exercise helps maintain balance and Tai Chi is a particularly good form of exercise to improve strength and balance. It also helps reduce stress.

Here are some [facts from the Centers For Disease Control](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/adultfalls.htm)

(<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/adultfalls.htm>)

about elders and falling that should convince you to check your home for falling hazards:

- Men are more likely to die from a fall than women. After adjusting for age, the fall fatality rate in 2004 was 49 percent higher for men than for women
- Rates of fall-related fractures among older adults are more than twice as high for women as for men
- The risk of being seriously injured in a fall increases with age. In 2001, the rates of fall injuries for adults 85 and older were four to five times that of adults 65 to 74
- People 75 and older who fall are four to five times more likely to be admitted into long-term care for a year or more

The Home Safety Council website has additional information about preventing falls at home including some [excellent checklists](#) [PDFs] you can print as guides to fall-proofing your home. Click on "Fall Prevention Resources" in the left sidebar.

Web Site of the Month:

Check our www.annuitytruth.org website - all about protecting seniors from unsuitable annuity sales. This is a long-standing battle here in California -- and we're seeing the reverse mortgage people joining in now. Under the "Who Can Help" tab, provides information for each state on who to complain to about the sale of an unsuitable annuity. We try to keep it up to date - if any of you have more recent information, please let me know.

H.E.L.P.®

a non-profit education and counseling center providing impartial information to older adults and their families on elder care, law, finances and more

www.help4srs.org

www.help4srs.org/seniortruth/

www.annuitytruth.org

www.better-endings.org

Helping Hand

Alabama

In the past, Republican politicians and trial lawyers resembled oil and water — they did not mix. So it's surprising that the Riley administration and the Alabama Association for Justice (formerly the Alabama Trial Lawyers Association) are working together for the good of our senior citizens. That is good news.

Between Nov. 15 and Dec. 31, elderly folks around the country will be able to change their Medicare Advantage health and their Medicare prescription drug plans. Out there are unscrupulous individuals who see this period as open season on seniors. They will descend on the elderly, bombard them with all sorts of plans and schemes, sign them up for bogus programs or collect information that will enable criminals to steal the identity of the vulnerable.

To combat this, the State Department of Senior Services will distribute 100,000 Medicare Protection Toolkits prior to the period when changes in coverage can be made. The kits are underwritten by a \$75,000 donation from the Alabama Association for Justice through its charitable agency, the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation.

They contain questions that seniors can ask of those who try to peddle coverage, facts on health-care options, things to look for in a health-care plan, and steps to safeguard their Medicare. Foremost is do not listen to people who come to your door claiming to be from Medicare, since it does not make house calls.

Senior citizens can get this kit by calling the Area Agency on Aging (1-800-243-5463) or the Alabama Department of Senior Services (1-877-425-2243). The toolkit also is available for downloading at AlabamaAgeline.gov.

If you know a senior citizen, pass this information along. And if they are having trouble contacting these agencies, place the call or go online for them.

The governor and the trial lawyers are doing this state and its senior citizens a great service. Let's all help.

Contact our editorial page

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"Angels" & "Saints" Needed For Northern Kentucky Meals On Wheels

Reported by: [Tom McKee](#)

Photographed by: [Scott Wegener](#)

Calling all "Angels" and "Saints."

The Meals on Wheels program of Senior Services of Northern Kentucky needs your help – now!

The agency currently serves about 700 senior citizens per day, but the names of 340 other people are on a waiting list to be screened.

"That means the social workers need to go in to see if they need nursing care, health care, transportation services or meals," said Donna Oehler, Senior Services vice-president for advancement.

"But, there's no funds available, so they just sit on the list until the funding becomes available," said Oehler.

Oehler says 21% of Kentucky's senior citizens live at or below the poverty level and they need Meals on Wheels for survival.

"It costs us \$1,700 a year to feed a senior citizen," Oehler said. "That's the equivalent of Medicare paying for a two-day hospital stay."

Information on donations is available online at [Senior Services of Northern Kentucky](#) or call (800) 255-7265.

Funding Opportunity for your Program

RMS and NATI provide funding opportunities for Triads, Domestic Violence, and other projects.

To participate, RMS requests that your organization collect used cell phones and contact them at:

911CellphoneBank.com or terrih@sheriffs.org

RMS pays for shipping phones to them and returns usable cell phones to: law enforcement, senior programs, and domestic violence organizations—to provide cell phones to those in need in your community. Salable phones are recycled, with funds being returned to your organization. Contact RMS or NATI today.

1450 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
800-424-7827 phone 703-519-8567 fax
triad@sheriffs.org www.nationaltriad.org



More Senior Safety related articles are located at www.nationaltriad.org; e-news section

Elderly find new life for their homes

Area program furnishes repairs, remodeling

By [JIMMY ISAAC](#)

Saturday, October 06, 2007

A home repair and modification program has given more than 100 elderly East Texans the freedom to continue living in their own homes.

The program is part of the Area Agency on Aging of East Texas, which is part of the East Texas Council of Governments. With grants from state and federal sources as well as local philanthropists, the agency was able to fund repairs in 14 East Texas counties.

The executive committee of the Council of Governments approved five more projects in four counties Thursday. Among the projects is the home of Gussie Hawley, an 84-year-old Gladewater resident who will have a \$3,700 roof installed on her South Mable Street house where she's lived since 1969 — one year before her husband died.

"I know I'm blessed," said Hawley, who has no children. "It makes me feel good."

Hawley, like most elderly residents in the program, would refuse to leave her home, even if offered a new residence, says Karen Cline and Claude Andrews with the Area Agency on Aging.

Lonnie Smith, a contractor who has repaired homes for six years with the agency, agrees. On Friday, he was finishing a repair project at the home of Dorothy and David McIntosh in Marion County.

The 94-year-old husband and 82-year-old wife had been on a waiting list since August 2004 because the ceiling in their Smithland community home was falling in and electrical problems disrupted service in some rooms and caused plugs to make a popping noise, Cline said.

"They're not giving up their house," the contractor said. "It would absolutely kill them to have to make a move out of their house. They're there for the duration."

The agency has spent \$29,148 on repair jobs at 119 East Texas homes, including 15 in Gregg County this year, the agency reports.

Every donation from any source helps, particularly when another 350 clients are on the agency's waiting list, she said. Some clients wait three or four years for services, but Cline wants that duration shortened to about three to four months.

"Unfortunately, we don't always have a solution for every case, but we all network to try and get the client the assistance they need," Cline said.

"I would love to be able, if someone called me, to turn around that same day and get those repairs done," she said. "Unfortunately, there's not enough money for the need in East Texas. Five of the 14 counties that we serve have been identified as high-poverty counties. That should wake people up to the fact that there is a need."

"This is a not a hand-out," Andrews added. "We're talking about helping elderly people live in their own homes."

Here are some of the home improvements the agency does:

- Roof repair
- Widen doorways
- Floor replacement
- Grab bar installation
- Ceiling replacement
- Light fixture repair or replacement

About the program

The home repair and modification program is one of several similar programs helping East Texans in need. The city of Longview's Community Development program is income-based rather than age-based; the Greater East Texas Community Action Program weatherizes homes in Gregg County, according to Area Agency on Aging in East Texas Housing Coordinator Karen Cline. Those programs all refer clients to each other when program organizers feel that the resident would be best served by someone else, she said.

Elder abuse on rise

A study by the National Center on Elder Abuse found a 19.7 percent increase in reports of elder and vulnerable abuse and neglect between 2000 and 2004, according to the most recent statistics available.

The study, which analyzed the latest data from states, found that overall in 2003, agencies received 565,747 reports of suspected elder and vulnerable adult abuse, as compared with 482,913 reports four years earlier. In 24 states, nearly half of the investigations were sustained.

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