

Summer Safety

Due to COVID-19, we had to cancel the annual S.A.L.T. picnic. Hopefully you can get outside during the summer months and get some fresh air! If you do, here are a few safety tips to keep in mind:

- If you go to a park or public outdoor area, use precautions such as wearing masks, social distancing, and wash hands often.
- Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries in the elderly. To avoid falls outside the home watch for uneven sidewalks, high curbs and other obstructions like tools or a garden hose.
- Chronic medical conditions change the body's response to heat and often prescription medications may affect the body's ability to control its temperature. Adjust your activity during hot weather to avoid heat exhaustion.

Sign-Up for Newsletter by Email

In an effort to reduce printing and mailing costs for the S.A.L.T. Times, if you currently receive the newsletter in the mail please consider having it sent to your email. To sign-up, just send an email to sheriffcommunityoutreach@clark.wa.gov or call 564-397-3380. (If you do not have email you will continue to get your copy by regular mail.)

As of August 1st, we will discontinue mailing the newsletter to subscribers who live outside of Washington state. To continue receiving the newsletter please sign-up for email distribution. The newsletter is also available via website at <https://www.clark.wa.gov/sheriff/seniors-and-law-enforcement-together>.



To receive the free monthly S.A.L.T. Times Newsletter, call 564.397.3380 or send an e-mail to: sheriffcommunityoutreach@clark.wa.gov **For other formats:** Clark County ADA Office, **Voice** 564.397.2322 **Relay** 711 or 800.833.6388 **E-mail** ADA@clark.wa.gov



Seniors And Law Enforcement Together

S.A.L.T. TIMES

July 2020

Tips to Manage Fireworks and Dementia



Fourth of July celebrations almost always include fireworks which can be scary for seniors who have dementia. The loud noises will be unfamiliar to them and can create a state of confusion and fear, which will exacerbate their dementia symptoms. With enough preparation, caregivers will be able to keep seniors who have dementia safe and comfortable while still having fun.

Here are a few guidelines that will help you prepare:

- Older adults who experience sundowning (agitation common among dementia patients in the evening hours), are most susceptible to fireworks distress which may increase anxiety and confusion. Make sure the inside of your home is well lit, even if most of the action is taking place outdoors. Take notice of his or her levels of anxiety and take proper steps to avoid over stimulation.

- Older adults with memory loss may need many reminders of upcoming fireworks leading up to the event. Leaving a note with the date and time for scheduled fireworks can be helpful for seniors who live alone. It's best not to leave seniors who have dementia alone on the Fourth of July. If you can't spend the evening with your loved one, consider having a home caregiver help for the night.
- Loud, booming fireworks can be scary to anybody with dementia, but especially to a senior war veteran who may start to relive their past. If fireworks are expected, a good idea may be to play their favorite music or an audio book through earphones to distract them from the noise.
- Check with neighbors to see what their fireworks plans are. Then prepare your loved one and explain that there

will be more people out and loud noises. Set them up with fun distractions to keep their mind engaged in something pleasant, such as a favorite movie or puzzle.

- Keep chaos to a minimum. Try to keep to normal routines as much as possible. If he or she takes a nap at 3:00, or watches television at 4:30, stick with that schedule. It will keep them calmer and help preserve their energy levels.
- The Fourth of July is the perfect time to form new memories. Ideas of things to do together include making crafts, baking Fourth of July themed desserts, and decorating the house. This can also double as art therapy. Making decorations may have a positive, stimulating effect on seniors with dementia and help them express themselves creatively.

alegrecare.com

Sheriff Chuck Atkins
Seniors And Law Enforcement Together
Clark County Sheriff's Office
P.O. Box 410
Vancouver, WA 98666



IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

Credit Reports are Free Your Medical Identity is a Hot Commodity for Scammers

Page 3

Five Must Dos When Planning to Age Alone

Page 4

Summer Safety Sign-Up for Newsletter

Credit Reports Are Now Free, Every Week

If you're feeling anxious about your financial health, you're not alone. That's why the three national credit reporting agencies are giving people weekly access to monitor their credit report — for free.

This is some helpful news, because staying on top of your credit report is one important tool to help manage your financial data. Your credit report has information about your credit history and payment history — information that lenders, creditors, and other businesses use when giving you loans or credit.

Now it's easier than ever to check your credit more often. That's because everyone is eligible to get free weekly credit reports from the three national credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian, and Transunion. To get your free reports, go to <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>. The credit reporting agencies are making these reports free for the next year.

If you're one of the many Americans struggling to pay your bills right now because of the Coronavirus crisis, here's what you can do:

- **Contact the companies you owe money to.** Ask if they can postpone your payment, put you on a payment plan, or give you a temporary forbearance.
- **Check your credit report regularly to make sure it's correct** — especially any new payment arrangements or temporary forbearance. The recently passed CARES Act generally requires your creditors to report these accounts as current.
- **Fix any errors or mistakes that you spot on your credit report.** Notify the credit reporting agencies directly. You can find out more by reading Disputing Errors on Credit Reports at <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0151-disputing-errors-credit-reports>.

Your Medical Identity is a Hot Commodity for Scammers

When we get medical care, we typically provide health insurance information. It's something we expect, and it may not raise any red flags. Unfortunately, scammers know this. And, with our health top of mind right now, they have no problem trying to take advantage. Their goal is to steal your medical identity — to fraudulently bill insurers or Medicare, or to sell it so others can get free care in your name.

How It Works

- Someone asks for your Medicare or insurance number as part of a health care "survey" or offer of free medical products or services.
- Scammers set up fake coronavirus testing sites in an attempt to get passersby to drive up and hand over health insurance or Medicare information.
- Criminals "dumpster dive" or steal mail looking for health insurance or Medicare information.

What You Should Know

- Medical identity theft can lead to huge financial losses and complications, including legal and medical costs, badly damaged credit, and aggressive medical debt collectors haranguing victims for years.
- If someone uses your medical identity to get treatment, it could result in treatment delays, incorrect prescriptions and even misdiagnoses for you.

What You Should Do

- Share your Medicare or health insurance information only with providers you know and trust — not with a stranger offering "free" medical care or equipment.
- Carefully review Medicare or health insurance statements and bills and report unauthorized charges immediately.
- Shred all paperwork related to your medical care before discarding it.

AARP Fraud Watch Network

Five Must Dos When Planning to Age Alone

When imagining our later years, many envision family by our side. But, with more Americans choosing an independent lifestyle and a growing number of adults living without a spouse or partner, the trend of aging solo is on the rise. In fact, more than 20 percent of adults 65 and older are aging independently or anticipate doing so in the future, according to AARP.

Commonly referred to as "solo agers," many adults are navigating their later years alone — whether they are single by choice, widowed, divorced or separated. Some health care experts have broadened the definition to include those with long-distance or unavailable caregivers.

While many solo agers embrace their independent lifestyle and enjoy the freedom that comes with living alone, others may find this reality daunting.

According to Home Instead gerontologist and caregiver advocate, Lakelyn Hogan, "Growing older can feel overwhelming at the best of times, even with great resources and a strong network of family and friends to help guide the way. With

so many decisions to be made, it can often feel easier to just delay planning to avoid making difficult life choices. But planning ahead can make all the difference."



Whether you identify as a solo ager, or know someone who could benefit from creating a plan for the later years, consider the following tips to help older adults

safeguard their future.

1. Plan for future care. There may come a time when you can no longer care for yourself independently. Research all potential options, including professional caregivers and assisted living facilities in your community, before deciding what is right for you.

2. Build a community. Meaningful relationships can make a world of difference in how happy and connected a person feels. To avoid isolation, try to identify individuals who might be willing to help you along your journey. Remember that many senior centers also offer services along with meal programs for older adults to socialize with each other.

3. Discuss your future home. Whether you or your loved one is planning to age in their current home, downsize, move to a senior

living community or choose to live with relatives, it's important to weigh every option before determining what "home" might look like for you.

4. Manage your estate. Insurance agents and financial planners can help determine the best options for professional care and put your mind at ease. If you don't have a family member, spouse or designated surrogate to make legal and medical decisions on your behalf, appoint a trusted advisor.

5. Start conversations early. By having discussions about desires and preferences early on, both you and your loved ones can feel more at peace and better prepared for the future. There are many free resources to help get started in Home Instead's Compose Your Life Song education program. If you no longer have immediate family or friends to have these conversations with, consider speaking with a professional caregiver about how you would like your future to look. Starting today can make for a smoother road ahead.

While establishing future decisions may not seem like a priority right now, a specific plan can help families and their loved ones feel more prepared for the later years of life. For more information on how to confidently plan for the future, visit CaregiverStress.com.