

## Medicare Beneficiaries: Don't become a Victim of a Scam

### Medicare does not make house calls

In the world of internet, email, phone calls, blogs and the postal service, Medicare beneficiaries are bombarded with advertisements about free medical services, free equipment and more. Other times, Medicare beneficiaries receive frightening post cards that lead them to believe they will lose their benefits if they don't respond and provide personal information.

Beware of products that seem too good to be true; they usually are. And if someone is using scare tactics to get you to buy something or share your personal information, you may be the target of a Medicare scam.

Every day there are people coming up with ways to defraud the Medicare system and its beneficiaries. They may call you on the phone, come to your home unannounced or send you information through the mail or email. How can you protect yourself? Do not give anyone personal information such as your Medicare number, Social Security number, or banking and financial information. Medicare will not call you and ask you to verify your claim number for them. If someone claims to be from Medicare and calls you your claim number, it's a scam!

When you do have to provide a Medicare card, such as at a visit to your medical provider, turn the card face down to hand to the receptionist so no one else can see your number or capture your number with their camera phone.

If you suspect Medicare fraud or a scam, you should contact your local Senior Medicare Patrol Program. The North Carolina Department of Insurance's Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program. The purpose of the Senior Medicare Patrol program is to provide Medicare fraud prevention education and counseling to the 1.7 million Medicare beneficiaries in North Carolina.

NCSMP operates a toll-free, confidential consumer line, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you suspect you have been a victim of Medicare fraud or a scam, call 1-855-408-1212 today. Together we can empower Medicare beneficiaries to prevent health care fraud.

## Hunters Urged to Think Before Pulling the Trigger

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Home From The Hunt safety campaign wants hunters to always think twice and positively identify their target and what is beyond it before pulling the trigger.

"Don't let anticipation or excitement cloud your judgment," said Kevin Crabtree, the state's southern coastal district hunter education coordinator. "Make sure there are no houses, vehicles or anyone beyond your target so the bullet, arrow or shot has a safe path to follow."

- The four basic rules of firearms safety:
- Always point a firearm in a safe direction.
- Treat every firearm as if it were loaded and never assume a firearm is unloaded.
- Keep your finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- Be sure of your target and what is beyond your target.

Hunters should use binoculars to first identify a target, Crabtree advised, and then sight through a scope only when ready to fire. This ensures the muzzle is always pointed in a safe direction.

All first-time hunting license buyers must successfully complete a Hunter Education Course, offered free across the state. Go to [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org) or call (919) 707-0031 for more information.

## USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to Farmers Facing Market Downturn

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that beginning today, nearly one half of the 1.7 million farms that signed up for either the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs will receive safety-net payments for the 2014 crop year.

"Unlike the old direct payments program, which paid farmers in good years and bad, the 2014 Farm Bill authorized a new safety-net that protects producers only when market forces or adverse weather cause unexpected drops in crop prices or revenues," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "For example, the corn price for 2014 is 30 percent below the historical benchmark price used by the ARC-County program, and revenues of the farms participating in the ARC-County program are down by about \$20 billion from the benchmark during the same period. The nearly \$4 billion provided today by the ARC and PLC safety-net programs will give assistance to producers where revenues dropped below normal."

The ARC/PLC programs primarily allow producers to continue to produce for the market by making payments on a percentage of historical base production, limiting the impact on production decisions.

Nationwide, 96 percent of soybean farms, 91 percent of corn farms, and 66 percent of wheat farms elected the ARC-County coverage option. Ninety-nine percent of long and medium grain rice and peanut farms, and 94 percent of medium grain rice farms elected the PLC option. Overall, 76 percent of participating farm acres are protected by ARC-County, 23 percent by PLC, and 1 percent by ARC-Individual. For data about other crops, as well as state-by-state program election results, final PLC price and payment data, and other program information including frequently asked questions, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

Crops receiving assistance include barley, corn, grain sorghum, lentils, oats, peanuts, dry peas, soybeans, and wheat. In the upcoming months, disbursements will be made for other crops after marketing year average prices are published by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. Any disbursements to participants in ARC-County or PLC for long and medium grain rice (except for temperate Japonica rice) will occur in November, for remaining oilseeds and also chickpeas in December, and temperate Japonica rice in early February 2016. ARC-individual payments will begin in November. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity.

The Budget Control Act of 2011, passed by Congress, requires USDA to reduce payments by 6.8 percent. For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local Farm Service Agency office. To find a local Farm Service Agency office, visit [offices.usda.gov](http://offices.usda.gov).

The Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs were made possible by the 2014 Farm Bill, which builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past six years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. Since enactment, USDA has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit [www.usda.gov/farmbill](http://www.usda.gov/farmbill).

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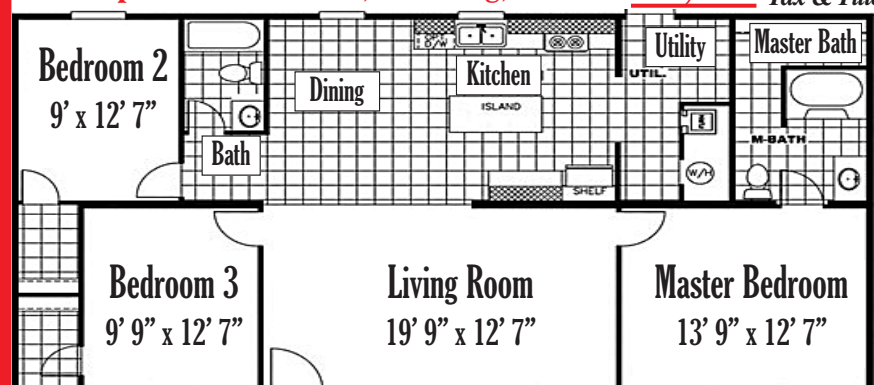
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