



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Encourages Local Seniors to Sign up for Newly Restarted Carrier Alert Program

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY September 25, 2013

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*Carrier Alert provides a daily check-in and notification system to protect the health and well-being of local seniors and people with disabilities.*

*After Kennedy's call for action in May, Carrier Alert will now be re-launched in Erie County.*

*Carrier Alert will be administered by USPS and National Association of Letter Carriers with support from AARP and Erie County Department of Senior Services.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, is encouraging local senior citizens to sign up for Carrier Alert, a newly restarted program that aims to protect the health and well-being of seniors and people with disabilities. Carrier Alert provides a daily check-in and notification system when letter carriers stop by the homes of individuals with limited mobility. At today's meeting of the Evergreens, a group of local seniors who meet monthly in South Buffalo, Senator Kennedy announced Carrier Alert will finally be re-launched and fully implemented in Erie County.

When an individual or their family requests the service, the letter carrier on that route will know to check in with the individual and ensure they are well if any unusual circumstances exist, such as an accumulation of the previous day's mail. The Carrier Alert program is available in communities across the country, but previously it had not been fully implemented or properly maintained in the Western New York area. As a result, local residents did not have access to the program.

When Senator Kennedy learned of this local gap in Carrier Alert's coverage area, he called for action. In May, Kennedy urged the local district office of the U.S. Postal Service to partner with his office and Branch 3 of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) to restart the Carrier Alert program in Western New York. Kennedy's office organized meetings with local non-profits and senior services agencies to build support for the program. AARP stepped forward to design and supply new, localized brochures to distribute to area seniors, and County Executive Mark Poloncarz and Senior Services Commissioner Randall Hoak directed the Erie County Department of Senior Services to help administer this vital safety program. Area residents will now have access to Carrier Alert.

"Letter carriers visit every home and business in the nation six days a week, and there have been countless instances of letter carriers saving lives and serving as neighborhood guardians along their routes," said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. "Carrier Alert will ensure there is

someone looking out for the safety of seniors and people with disabilities in neighborhoods throughout Erie County. We recognized the urgency of restarting Carrier Alert in Western New York, and now local seniors will finally have access to this common-sense tool to help them remain independent and safe in the homes where they've long resided. I want to thank the National Association of Letter Carriers, the U.S. Postal Service, AARP and the Erie County Department of Senior Services for their commitment to reinstating Carrier Alert."

**Erie County Department of Senior Services Commissioner Randall Hoak** said, "Participation in 'Carrier Alert' is a great way to provide peace of mind for families who may not be able to visit their homebound relatives as often as they would like, or for any family with an older relative living at home alone. As the sponsor agency for Carrier Alert, Erie County Senior Services looks forward to working with the United States Postal Service and AARP to keep older adults safe in their communities."

**Larry Kania, president of the local branch of the National Association of Letter Carriers**, said, "The Carrier Alert program is a common-sense tool that helps letter carriers make sure senior citizens on our routes are safe. Earlier this year, Senator Kennedy joined us in calling for action on Carrier Alert to protect the safety of senior citizens and people with disabilities, and we want to thank him for all his help. We also extend our gratitude to the USPS, AARP, the Erie County Department of Senior Services and County Executive Poloncarz for their support, which has been absolutely vital to our efforts to restart Carrier Alert in Erie County."

**USPS Buffalo Officer in Charge Martin Siminski** noted, "Postal employees are the guardian angels of their communities. The Carrier Alert Program is a natural extension of what postal employees already do – watch out for the residents they serve."

NALC Branch 3 and the U.S. Postal Service will jointly administer the program with the support of AARP and the Erie County Department of Senior Services. AARP will cover the cost of producing Carrier Alert brochures, and the Department of Senior Services will serve as the agency, to which local letter carriers will report any concerns involving Carrier Alert registrants along their route. The United Way of Buffalo and Erie County has volunteered to help publicize the program, and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association will be providing support to implement Carrier Alert throughout the local district of the USPS.

Carrier Alert requires interested residents or their families to opt-in to the program. Once registered in the program, a letter carrier will put a Carrier Alert symbol in the individual's mailbox to inform other carriers to be mindful of any indications of alarm – like a build-up of mail. If there appears to be distress, the carrier will take steps to check on the resident's well-being.

The carrier will notify his or her supervisor who will call the Erie County Department of Senior Services. The Department of Senior Services will then attempt to contact the resident by phone. If the resident does not answer, the department will reach out to emergency contacts listed on the resident's Carrier Alert registration. If the emergency contact cannot be reached, Senior Services will contact local law enforcement to check on the resident's safety.

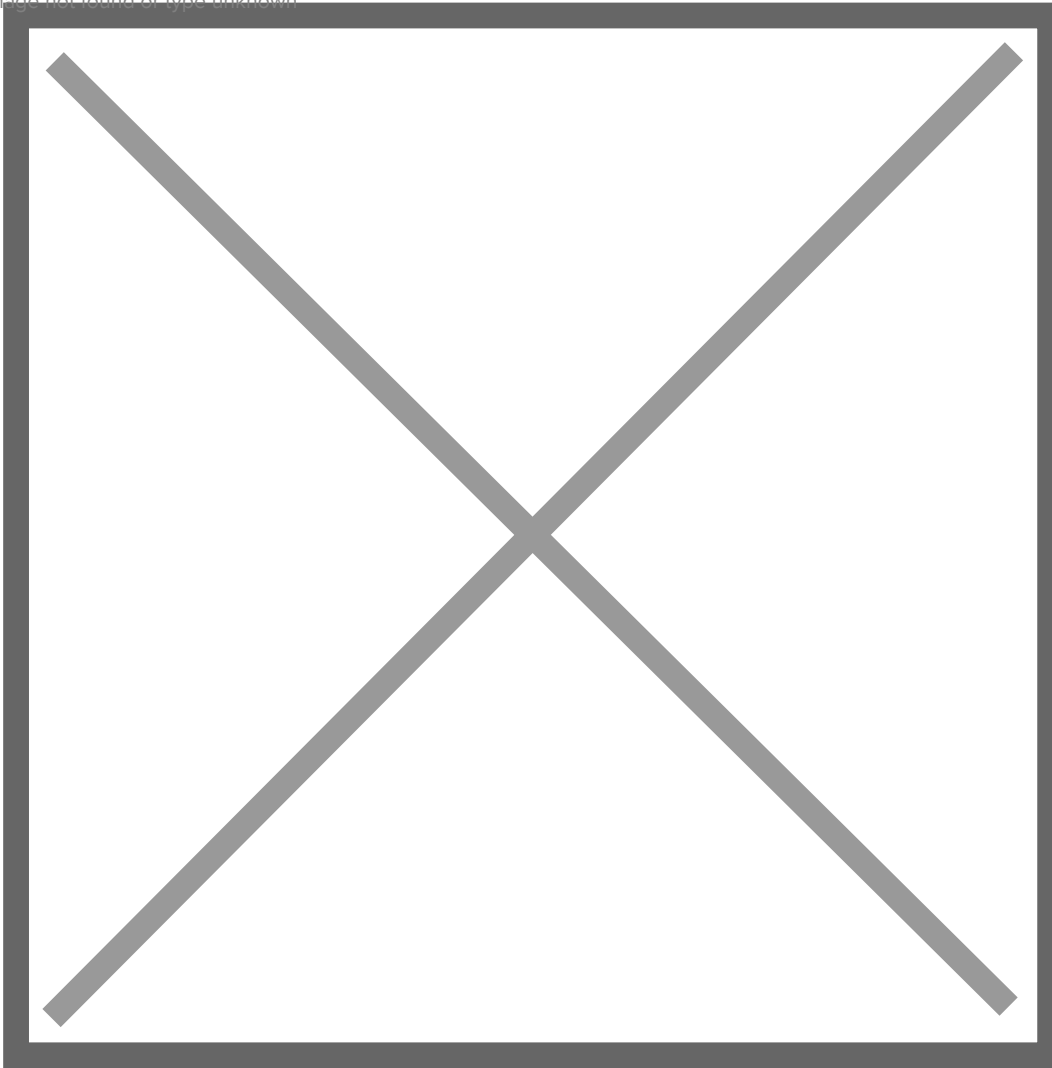
**Local seniors interested in registering for Carrier Alert should contact the Erie County Department of Senior Services at 858-8526 or Senator Kennedy's office at 826-2683.**

In the photo above, letter carrier Tom Matuszak tells the story of entering a burning house along his route to save the elderly resident who lived there. Senator Kennedy says Carrier Alert will lead to heroic stories like Mr. Matuszak's, when letter carriers are looking out for residents along their route.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*

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*Senator Tim Kennedy explains the Carrier Alert program to the Evergreens, a group of local seniors who meet monthly in South Buffalo.*