Overview: MedicAlert® + Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return® is a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer’s or a related dementia who wander or have a medical emergency.

If an individual with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia wanders and becomes lost, caregivers can call the emergency response line to report it. A community support network will be activated, including local Alzheimer’s Association chapters and law enforcement agencies, to help reunite the family member or caregiver with the person who wandered.

If a citizen or emergency personnel finds the member, they can call the toll-free number listed on the member’s ID jewelry. MedicAlert + Safe Return will notify the member’s listed contacts, making sure the person is returned home.

MedicAlert® + Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return® Overview:

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60% of the 5.4 million Americans who currently have Alzheimer’s disease will wander at some point in their disease.

Be Aware

- No system is 100% accurate. Technological devices have limitations.
- Make sure the system is updated and in working order before beginning any program.
- Consult with a physician and law enforcement before beginning any program. They may have valuable guidance on a locative program to use.
- Weather, terrain, and time of day may be a factor in effectiveness.
- Most services require a monthly subscription or an initial investment in the product.
- Make sure that the program has trustworthy cyber-protection components.
- Some products need to be recharged regularly, which means that the at-risk-person is unprotected while the unit is charging.
- Understand that elder locative technologies are not the same as a 24-hour companion.
Overview: Satellite-Based Positioning systems or Global Positioning systems (GPS) use a series of satellites that orbit the earth, broadcasting signals which are picked up by a network of receivers or in this case a recipient, such as an elderly person, who is wearing the device. In order for the GPS device to work, effectively, there needs to be a clear “line of sight” between the receptor and the satellites.

Cellular devices and satellite-based databases are also included within this category.

Advantages:
- Worldwide capabilities
- Accurate reading at any time of the day
- Real time tracking
- Location information available in a matter of seconds
- Data security and cell phone alert features

Disadvantages:
- May not be able to track inside buildings
- All satellites need to be operational
- Monthly monitoring fees
- Generalized, not specific location tracking
- Obstruction will produce inaccurate readings
- GPS maps need to be kept updated

Overview: Land-Based tracking systems such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) based systems work through a transmission of radio waves between a transponder, antenna, and a receiver. The RFID chip transmits a signal to the receiver through the antenna and provides data on a person’s location.

RFID systems are geared toward professional caregivers (i.e. hospitals, law enforcement).

Advantages:
- Signals go through most walls
- Precise location recognition
- Some systems provide professional training
- Custom room/vicinity monitoring*
- Ability to be intergraded with electromagnetic locks, access control systems, and other security devices*

Disadvantages:
- Signal can be obstructed by physical barriers
- Strength of signals may vary according to distance
- Cost of implementing a program can be expensive
- Size of transmission and reception antennas are a factor in receiving signals

*Not all RFID systems have this capability.

Overview: Network Assisted GPS (A-GPS) or Hybrid Tracking systems combine elements from two or more systems in-order to increase accuracy and responsiveness. A-GPS technology works in conjunction with GPS systems by using cell towers to triangulate locations.

Advantages:
- Combines elements from two or more systems (i.e. GPS, cellular towers, database systems)
- Provides accurate readings, particularly in enclosed areas
- Customer controlled geo-fencing
- Information receiving is immediate and can be stored into a database system
- Instant cell phone notifications
- Less processing power is required by the device which saves battery life

Disadvantages:
- Dependent on reliable cell phone service
- Phone must be equipped with a GPS chipset
- If there is a disturbance in one technology then the effectiveness of the others may be at risk
- Not easily manageable to those who are unfamiliar with recent/trending technology
- Cost of service and devices can be expensive

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