

# NORTHERN CALIFORNIA PIPE TRADES TRUST FUNDS FOR UA LOCAL 342

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October 2016

**TO: All Medicare Eligible Participants and Dependents**

**RE: Important Notice from the Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Trust Fund about Your Prescription Drug Coverage and Medicare**

**Note: You are not required to take any action. This Notice is required by law.**

If you or any of your family members are now eligible or will become eligible for Medicare in the next 12 months, please read this Notice carefully and keep it where you can find it. This Notice has information about your current prescription drug coverage with the Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Trust Fund and about your options under Medicare's prescription drug coverage. This information can help you decide whether or not you want to join a Medicare drug plan. If you are considering joining, you should compare your current coverage, including which drugs are covered at what cost, with the coverage and costs of the plans offering Medicare prescription drug coverage in your area. Information about where you can get help to make decisions about your prescription drug coverage is at the end of this Notice.

There are two important things you need to know about your current coverage and Medicare's prescription drug coverage:

1. Medicare prescription drug coverage became available in 2006 to everyone with Medicare. You can get this coverage if you join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan or join a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO) that offers prescription drug coverage. All Medicare drug plans provide at least a standard level of coverage set by Medicare. Some plans may also offer more coverage for a higher monthly premium.
2. **The Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Trust Fund has determined that the prescription drug coverage offered by the Kaiser Plan option and Blue Shield Plan option are, on average for all Plan Participants, expected to pay out as much as standard Medicare prescription drug coverage pays and is therefore considered Creditable Coverage. Because your existing coverage is Creditable Coverage, you can keep this coverage and not pay a higher premium (a penalty) if you later decide to join a Medicare drug plan.**

## **When Can You Join A Medicare Drug Plan?**

You can join a Medicare drug plan when you first become eligible for Medicare and each year from October 15<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup>. However, if you lose your current creditable prescription drug coverage, through no fault of your own, you will also be eligible for a two (2) month Special Enrollment Period (SEP) to join a Medicare drug plan.

## **What Happens To Your Current Coverage If You Decide To Join A Medicare Drug Plan?**

If you decide to join a Medicare drug plan, your current Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Plan coverage (Kaiser or Blue Shield) will be affected. If you enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan, you and your eligible Dependents will not be eligible to receive all of your current health and prescription drug benefits. Unlike a Medicare drug plan, your current coverage covers other health expenses in addition to prescription drugs. As a result, the Board of Trustees and the advisors to the Plan have concluded that this Plan's prescription drug benefits you currently receive under this Plan provide equal or better coverage, at less cost to you, than the Medicare Part D Drug Program benefits. As long as you are eligible for a prescription drug plan that has coverage that is equal to or better than what is offered under Medicare Part D, you are considered to have "Creditable Coverage". Therefore, if at some later date you choose to enroll in Medicare Part D, you will not be charged a late penalty for delayed enrollment.

*If you decide to join a Medicare drug plan and drop your current Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Plan coverage (Kaiser or Blue Shield), be aware that you and your Dependents will not be able to get this coverage back.*

## **When Will You Pay A Higher Premium (Penalty) To Join A Medicare Drug Plan?**

You should also know that if you drop or lose your current coverage with the Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Trust Fund and don't join a Medicare drug plan within sixty-three (63) continuous days after your current coverage ends, you may pay a higher premium (a penalty) to join a Medicare drug plan later.

If you go sixty-three (63) continuous days or longer without creditable prescription drug coverage, your monthly premium may go up by at least 1% of the Medicare base beneficiary premium per month for every month that you did not have that coverage. For example, if you go nineteen (19) months without creditable coverage, your premium may consistently be at least 19% higher than the Medicare base beneficiary premium. You may have to pay this higher premium (a penalty) as long as you have Medicare prescription drug coverage. In addition, you may have to wait until the following October to join.

**For More Information About This Notice Or Your Current Prescription Drug Coverage, Please Contact the Trust Fund Office.**

**NOTE:** You will get this Notice annually as required by law. You will also receive it before the next period you can join a Medicare drug plan, and if the coverage through the Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Trust Fund changes or terminates. You also may request a copy of this Notice at any time.

**For More Information About Your Options Under Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage, you would need to contact Medicare directly.**

More detailed information about Medicare plans that offer prescription drug coverage is in the "Medicare & You" handbook. You get a copy of the handbook in the mail every year from Medicare. You may also be contacted directly by Medicare drug plans.

For more information about Medicare prescription drug coverage:

- Visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)
- Call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (see the inside back cover of your copy of the "Medicare & You" handbook at <https://www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/10050.pdf> for their telephone number) for personalized help or visit: <https://www.medicare.gov/contacts/#resources/ships>.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (800/633-4227). TTY users should call 877/486-2048.

If you have limited income and resources, extra help paying for Medicare prescription drug coverage is available. For more information about this extra help, visit Social Security on the web at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), or call them at 800/772-1213. TTY users should call 800/325-0778.

**REMEMBER: Keep this Creditable Coverage Notice. If you decide to join one of the Medicare drug plans, you may be required to provide a copy of this Notice when you join to show whether or not you have maintained creditable coverage and, therefore, whether or not you are required to pay a higher premium (a penalty).**

**Date: October 2016**  
**Name of Entity/Sender: Northern California Pipe Trades Health and Welfare Trust Fund**  
**Contact: Eligibility Department**  
**Address: 1855 Gateway Blvd., Suite 350**  
**Concord, CA 94520-8445**  
**Phone Number: 925/356-8921 or 800/780-8984**  
**Extension 510**

As in all cases and situations, the Plan reserves the right to modify benefits at any time, in accordance with applicable law. As required by law, this document is intended to serve as your Medicare Prescription Drug Notice of Creditable Coverage.