

# 9-1-1 Education for Children



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Emergency Services Communication Bureau  
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## **About the Emergency Services Communication Bureau**

The mission of the Maine Emergency Services Communication Bureau (Bureau) is to operate and manage Maine's statewide Enhanced 9-1-1 emergency reporting service. One of the most important benefits the system is the automatic display of the 9-1-1 caller's address. This allows public safety call takers to quickly dispatch emergency services in order to minimize delays that could endanger a person's life and/or property.

Addressing is a critical component of Enhanced 9-1-1. Without an accurate street address, the location safety feature is of no value. As a result, during the past several years Maine communities have created numbers and street addresses for every local property. This information is part of the Enhanced 9-1-1 database and is the source for call takers answering 9-1-1 calls.

Most of the state has Enhanced 9-1-1 service. Aroostook and Hancock counties should be activated by year-end 2002, and the town of Lincoln will be activated when they fund their **local** 9-1-1 call coverage. Communities in these areas must continue to dial the seven or nine digit telephone numbers for fire, police and medical service emergencies.

Teaching children how to use 9-1-1 is critical. The Bureau invites you to read this booklet designed for teachers and parents of elementary school children. If you have any questions, you may call us during business hours at **(207) 877-8050**.

For the latest on Enhanced 9-1-1 service in Maine, please visit the Bureau web site at [www.maine911.com](http://www.maine911.com).

# A Note To The Teacher or Parent

Maine's 9-1-1 public education program has three basic goals:

1. **TO INFORM** students where 9-1-1 is available and how 9-1-1 provides quick response to emergencies.
2. **TO EMPHASIZE** when 9-1-1 should be called: "to save a life, stop a crime and report a fire."
3. **TO SUSTAIN** awareness until dialing 9-1-1 becomes an automatic response for emergencies.

The long-range success of 9-1-1 hinges on teaching children how and when to dial 9-1-1. The importance of teachers and parents in this process cannot be underestimated. We ask you to read the material and present it in the easiest and most comfortable way possible.

The 9-1-1 program is a simple idea. The goal is to have a standardized emergency response system. We believe this curriculum will help explain the importance and benefits of 9-1-1. It is flexible and can be adapted to a variety of learning situations.

9-1-1 offers the following benefits:

1. There is only one number to remember in an emergency.
2. It can be taught to children who are too young to read.
3. 9-1-1 is a free call from all public pay phones.

## Suggested Curricula

### What students should know about 9-1-1:

1. **Teach students to dial 9-1-1.** Do not refer to this emergency number as 9-11 (nine-eleven) because there is no eleven on the telephone and a child can be easily confused.
2. **Teach students HOW and WHEN to dial 9-1-1.** The “**HOW**” can be best accomplished by constant repetition and practice. The “**WHEN**” is a little more complicated. First you may want to explain what an emergency is. **In the case of 9-1-1, any life-threatening situation is considered to be an emergency.** Children should be taught that whenever they need to get the police, fire department or an ambulance in a hurry, call 9-1-1.
3. **Teach students about non-emergencies.** For example, 9-1-1 should not be called for a barking dog, a kitten stuck in a tree or to find out if school has been cancelled. If the student is confused as to whether a particular situation is an emergency, he/she should always call 9-1-1.
4. **Instill in students the need to TRUST the 9-1-1 call taker.** Explain to them that the 9-1-1 call taker is their friend and a source of help during an emergency.
5. **Teach students important addresses, especially their home.** Suggest to students that parents post a list of important addresses near all home telephones, including grandparents, close relatives, friends and neighbors. Also, post directions to the house by the phone.
6. **Advise students about the different emergency situations that they might experience. Instruct them to dial 9-1-1 should these emergencies actually take**

- place.** If a family member or friend has an illness such as a heart condition, tell the students how to identify the symptoms, i.e. the person is not breathing or suddenly collapsing.
7. **Teach students that calling 9-1-1 is not a game.** It is against the law to dial 9-1-1 if there is not an emergency. Someone's life may be in danger and jeopardized if dispatchers are handling crank calls.
  8. **At the same time you must avoid discouraging children from using 9-1-1.** Any time that they think there is a *need to use* 9-1-1 encourage them, even if they are in doubt.

# Maine Public Education Curriculum

## Grades K-3

**Goal:** To teach children to call 9-1-1 when they need immediate help from police, fire or emergency medical personnel

**Objectives:**

1. Children will learn the use and purpose of 9-1-1:
  - a. 9-1-1 is a special telephone number.
  - b. 9-1-1 gets help in a hurry.
  - c. 9-1-1 dialing instructions (rotary, touch-tone, cordless or cellular phone).
  - d. 9-1-1 is free on *public* pay phones.
2. Children will learn what an emergency is and the importance of staying calm, speaking clearly and when to hang up.
  - a. Examples of emergencies and when to call 9-1-1
    - Serious injury such as a heart attack or a person who stops breathing or is choking.
    - Being approached or followed by a stranger
    - Smoke/fire coming from a building.
  - b. It is **OK** to be nervous or scared in an emergency.
  - c. Do not hang up the telephone until the dispatcher tells you to.
3. Students will learn the importance of knowing their address, telephone number, and providing important information.
  - a. Memorize their address and post it on or near all home phones.
  - b. Know the address of the emergency.
  - c. "**Remember everything you see**" and provide this information to the call taker.

# Maine Public Education Curriculum

For Grades 4 - 6

**Goal:** To teach children that 9-1-1 is an *emergency* telephone number that you can call 24 hours a day, from any kind of telephone to request immediate assistance when you see a person's life or well-being threatened, property endangered or a crime is in progress.

**Objectives:**

1. The student will know and understand that 9-1-1 means help fast.
  - a. There is safety in the number: 9-1-1.
  - b. In an emergency, go to a safe place *before* trying to call for help.
2. The student will learn what constitutes a 9-1-1 emergency.
  - a. A situation that calls for immediate action.
  - b. A situation when the caller feels he or she is in some sort of danger.
  - c. If in doubt, call 9-1-1.
3. The student will know and understand why he or she should not abuse the system.
  - a. It is against the law to dial 9-1-1 if you do not have an emergency.
  - b. Someone else's life or property could be in danger if people abuse 9-1-1.

# Background Information for Teachers

## 1. What is 9-1-1?

9-1-1 is the fastest and most effective emergency telephone number. With 9-1-1, the caller gains access to emergency services such as FIRE, POLICE, and AMBULANCE. There is no longer a need to remember several seven-digit emergency telephone numbers or to waste precious time searching through a telephone book for the proper phone number.

## 2. What is Enhanced 9-1-1?

This system automatically provides the call taker with the 9-1-1 caller's address and telephone number, although the call taker will try to verify this information. It is always important for the caller to state the problem so that the appropriate emergency response can be immediately dispatched. The caller should remain on the line until the call taker says it is okay to hang up. 9-1-1 personnel are specially trained in getting accurate and complete information quickly.

## 3. When do you use 9-1-1?

It is only to be used in an emergency, not for trivial information such as school closures or local dump hours. **An emergency is any situation that requires immediate response.** Call if a person's life or well being is threatened, property is endangered, an illegal activity is in progress, or for any situation in which the police, fire, or ambulance are needed immediately. If ever in doubt, call 9-1-1. It is better to be safe and check it out with the authorities.

An emergency is not:

- when your pet is sick (9-1-1 is for people, not animals)
- when you are bored and just want to talk to someone
- when you want to find out trivial information
- playing on the phone to see if 9-1-1 works
- making prank calls

## 4. Can I get away with prank calls?

**No!** 9-1-1 is for emergencies. It should only be used when **immediate** attention is needed for fire, police, or ambulance service. If in doubt, call 9-1-1. The call taker is trained to determine if questionable situations are emergencies.

Prank 9-1-1 calls not only waste time and money, but can also prevent someone else with an emergency from reaching a call taker. Police personnel are sent to check **all** 9-1-1 call hang-ups. This takes time and could prevent officers from responding to valid emergency calls.

Each emergency call center has as a limited number of 9-1-1 lines, which under normal circumstances, are more than adequate to handle most emergency situations. If several 9-1-1 lines are tied up with prank calls, it can hinder someone with an emergency from getting through to a dispatcher.

**5. Make sure students know their phone number and address!**

It is **always** important to know your home phone number, address, directions and parent/close relatives' work numbers. In an emergency this information can prove to be as valuable as your name. It is a good idea to write these numbers down. Suggest that all emergency contact numbers be posted by every phone so that any person can call for help if there is an emergency.

**Example:**    **Name/Age of all family members**  
                  **Address**  
                  **Directions to your home**  
                  **Home telephone number**  
                  **Father and mother's work number**  
                  **Contact person (neighbor, friend, relative):**  
                          **-name**  
                          **-address**  
                          **-telephone number**

## **How To Make An Emergency Call**

1. **Learn to recognize emergency situations.** Talk with your friends about what an emergency is, and possible situations that could happen in their house or apartment. The most important thing to remember in an emergency is to get to a safe location **before** trying to call for help. If there is a fire, leave the house right away and stay out. Then go to a neighbor's house or pay phone to call 9-1-1, which is free. Friends and neighbors should discuss pre-planned instructions with themselves in case there is an emergency.
  
2. **When the call taker answers, remind students to:**
  - a. **BE CALM and say:** "I have an emergency."
  - b. **SPEAK CLEARLY!** Don't talk too fast. Give the call taker a clear and simple description of the emergency.
  - c. **TELL THE CALL TAKER WHERE YOU NEED HELP.** If you don't know the address, tell the **call taker** you are not sure. With Maine's new system, the address of the caller will be displayed if Enhanced 9-1-1 is available for that phone exchange. The call taker will always try to confirm the information.
  - d. **STAY ON THE TELEPHONE!** Do not hang-up unless the call taker tells you it is okay! This is important so that the call taker can continue to ask questions or get more information. All hang-up calls require the call taker to dispatch emergency services.
  - e. Once the call taker tells you to hang up the telephone, **STAY BY THE PHONE** in case he/she needs to call you back.
  
3. **If you see an emergency, don't assume someone has already called. Please call 9-1-1.**
  
4. **REMEMBER IN THE CASE OF FIRE, LEAVE THE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY. CALL FOR HELP FROM ANOTHER LOCATION.**

# Talks with Children

## 1. The number 9-1-1: What is it?

- 9-1-1 is a special telephone number that you dial when people have emergencies.
- This special number means that you can get help in a hurry and should only be used when there is a serious problem.

## 2. What is a 9-1-1 Emergency?

- A 9-1-1 emergency is a situation when a police officer, a fire fighter or an ambulance is needed right away.
- Suggest the following situations and ask the students if each is a 9-1-1 emergency:

- You are at home with your mother and she falls and hurts herself. You talk to her, but her eyes are closed, and she can't speak. Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**YES, because medical help is needed immediately.**

- Your cat climbs up a tree and won't come down, no matter what you do. Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**NO. 9-1-1 is only for people.**

- You look out your window and see flames coming from the roof of your friend's house across the street. Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**YES, because a fire endangers property and sometimes lives.**

- You are home from school but your parents are not. You are watching television, and you hear someone trying to break in the back door. Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**YES, because a crime is in progress.**

- Your dog gets into a fight with another dog and your dog is hurt. Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**NO, 9-1-1 is for people only.**

- You are walking home from your friend's house and a stranger in a car tells you he will take you home. You run to your house and lock the door. Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**YES, because you are trying to stop a crime.**

- Your friend is crossing a street to come and play at your house. A car comes speeding down the street and hits your friend? Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**YES because medical help is needed immediately.**

- You smell smoke in your house. No one is home. Is this an emergency? Should you call 9-1-1?

**YES, because the house may be on fire.**

### 3. Does 9-1-1 work on all types of phones?

- **YES. Practice dialing** 9-1-1 on a rotary, touch-tone or cellular phone. Show pictures or demonstrate on an actual phone that is **not connected**. Explain that you never practice on a real phone.
- **Cellular phones:** Stress the importance of identifying their location to the **call taker** because the Enhanced 9-1-1 address feature is currently not available for cellular phones.

### 4. What happens when you dial 9-1-1?

The call goes to call takers who are specially trained to help emergency callers. The 9-1-1 **call taker** will ask: "9-1-1, what is your emergency?" The call taker will then ask where the emergency is and your phone number. Try to provide as much information as possible about the emergency and your location.

### 5. Important things to remember when dialing 9-1-1:

- Be prepared to tell the call taker the location of the emergency.
- Teach your students their address and show them how to place it on or near their home telephones.

- When you dial 9-1-1 try to remain calm and speak very clearly so that the call taker can understand you.
- Try to think of important facts to tell the call taker about your emergency. Remember everything you see! Is the person breathing? Is there anyone in the house? Where is the fire? What did the burglar look like?

**6. What happens if a child dials 9-1-1 and there is no emergency?**

- "9-1-1" is a special number for reporting emergencies. It is against the law to dial 9-1-1 if you do not have an emergency.
- Most importantly, a person may not get the emergency service he/she needs if children are playing with 9-1-1.

## **Same Questions Put Another Way**

**1. What is 9-1-1?**

- 9-1-1 is special telephone number to call for emergencies.
- When you call 9-1-1 dispatchers will send help in a hurry.

**2. What is a 9-1-1 emergency?**

- It is a situation that requires the police, fire or an ambulance.
- A life-threatening situation.

**3. What type of phone can you use?**

- Rotary or touch-tone.
- Cordless.
- Pay phone – a free call.
- Cellular phone.

**4. What happens when you dial 9-1-1?**

- A trained public safety person will help.

**5. Things to remember when dialing 9-1-1:**

- Know the address of the emergency
- Remain calm and speak clearly.
- Explain every thing you see.
- Don't hang up until the call taker says it is all right.

**6. What happens if you dial 9-1-1 and there is no emergency?**

- It is against the law to call if there is not an emergency. Another person's life could be in jeopardy if the 9-1-1 lines are tied up with crank or non-emergency calls.

## Suggested Activities for 9-1-1 Programs

- Field Trip** An exciting way to introduce students to the world of public safety is to arrange a field trip to the dispatch center, the police station or firehouse. The field trip will reinforce the idea of the 9-1-1 classroom experiences.
- Maine 9-1-1** Visit the state's web site: [www.maine911.com](http://www.maine911.com) and look for the "kids" button. There are games and coloring book images that explain Maine's emergency program. Students can use these materials online or they can be downloaded and used in the classroom or at home.
- Art Fair** Using Public Safety figures and 9-1-1 as themes for students an Art Fair is another positive way for students to create and express what they know about police, fire and EMS (rescue/ambulance) services and the emergency telephone number 9-1-1.
- Have students cut and paste pictures from magazines and newspapers depicting emergency situations and personnel. This could be done individually or as a group project.
  - Using markers, crayons and/or paints, have the students create their own pictures.
  - Students can trace stencils to create badges and using glue and gold or silver glitter, add a sparkling touch.
  - Multicolored pipe cleaners can be made into emergency vehicle shapes (police cars, ambulances, fire trucks).
- Spelling Bee** For grades 2 and 3, the vocabulary/spelling list can be used for a spelling contest. Additional words pertaining to public safety will probably stem from class discussion and be added to the list. A spelling contest would encourage the students in memory reading and writing skills.
- Drama** Have the students write their own skits or work on a play that would include a variety of emergency roles. Make sure to include the process of calling for help. A good practice tool would be some type of phone where the children could take turns pressing or dialing the numbers 9-1-1.
- Role Playing** Pretend to be a 9-1-1 call taker. Ask for volunteers to say what their emergency could be.

## **Discussing 9-1-1 with Students**

9-1-1 discussions will be more dynamic if presented by public safety officials (e.g., DARE officer, EMT, 9-1-1 call taker, firefighter or police officer).

Begin discussion by asking questions such as:

- Who knows what the word “emergency” means?
- What does a fireman do?
- What does a policeman do?
- What does an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) do?
- When should a person call for help?
- When should a person call 9-1-1?
- Has anyone in this room ever called the Police Department?
- Has anyone in this room ever called the Fire Department?
- Has anyone in this room ever called for an ambulance?
- Do you all know how to call for help?
- Do you all know how to call 9-1-1?

### **Vocabulary/Spelling Words**

emergency	firefighter (fireman)	injury (hurt)	cruiser
ambulance	stranger	crime	fire
flame	help	save	aware
assist	police officer	fire engine	rescue
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)		9-1-1	call taker

# Sample Children's Program

Ask students to raise their hands if they know an answer to the questions. Provided below are sample questions and answers. Realize that students may not know all the answers, but this is designed as a learning experience.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** Do you know what 9-1-1 is?

**Answer:** The number you call in an emergency.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** Do you know what an emergency is?

**Answer:** A situation that requires immediate help.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** Who do you get help from when you call 9-1-1? Name three officials.

**Answer:** Firemen, Policemen, and EMTs (Emergency Medical Technician)

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** Can you give me some examples of what an emergency is?

**Answer:** A person is choking. A person has a heart attack. A person stops breathing.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** Give students examples of different situations and ask them to tell you if they are emergency 9-1-1 calls.

1. A friend falls out of a tree and is hurt very badly. **yes**
2. You are home alone and there is a stranger lurking around your house. **yes**
3. You are home alone, bored and lonely and call 9-1-1 for company. **no**
4. A neighbor's house is on fire. **yes**
5. Somebody is in a car accident and is hurt. **yes**
6. Friends get into an argument, and they are not talking to each other. **no**
7. A dog has a bad limp. **no, 9-1-1 is for people not animals**
8. A burglar breaks into your neighbor's window. **yes**

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** What happens if students know it is not an emergency and call 9-1-1?

**Answer:** The police will come and they will get in trouble. It is against the law to call 9-1-1 if there is not a real emergency.

Always reinforce that if students are not sure about an emergency situation, they should call 9-1-1. It is always better to be safe.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** What do you tell the call taker when you call 9-1-1 for an emergency?

**Answer:** Your name and address; what and where the emergency is. Also any information about the people involved in the emergency

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** Are there any emergencies that you would not run to the closest phone and call 9-1-1?

**Answer:** Yes, in a fire everyone should get out of the house or building, then go to a neighbor's house or a pay phone to call 9-1-1.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** Do you need money to dial 9-1-1 from a pay phone?

**Answer:** No. 9-1-1 calls are free on pay phones.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** What should people do if they are in an area that doesn't have 9-1-1?

**Answer:** Call the seven-digit emergency number.

**Presenter/**

**Teacher:** That is correct, and remember it is always good to know what the emergency number is before you need it. Save time for questions.

# **History of 9-1-1 in the United States**

**9-1-1** is an easy number to dial and remember. It is a fast and reliable way to get fire, police or medical assistance in an emergency. The idea of a three-digit emergency telephone number is not new. Great Britain introduced 9-9-9 as a number for emergency services in 1937. Most of Western Europe had adopted some sort of emergency number system by the early 1950's and other European countries followed.

In the United States the International Association of Fire Chiefs were the first to recommend a single nationwide fire reporting telephone number. In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement suggested that a national emergency phone number be established. On January 12, 1968, American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) designated the digits 9-1-1 to be used throughout the country as the dedicated emergency telephone number.

In 1973, the three-digit number 9-1-1 was officially established as our national emergency telephone number. Implementation of this service was left to state and local governments.

Beginning with California, several states passed legislation encouraging or mandating local installation of 9-1-1 systems. The first 9-1-1 system to be installed in the United States was located in Haleyville, Alabama in 1968.

## **9-1-1 in Maine**

In 1988, Maine voters approved a statewide Enhanced 9-1-1 system and authorized a \$3.2 million bond issue to provide initial funding. The Maine Department of Public Safety was charged with implementing Enhanced 9-1-1 service. The Department released an implementation study in 1992, which outlined several key recommendations for initial system development. In 1994, Public Law 566 established the Emergency Services Communication Bureau within the Department of Public Safety to implement and manage Maine's emergency reporting system. Today, about 91 percent of the state has Enhanced 9-1-1 service.