

## Don't hesitate!

Call takers and responders are available 24 hours a day/365 days a year. Don't worry about calling too early or too late. Don't worry about inconveniencing anyone, either. We can always turn back if we're not needed. On the mainland, help is usually only a few minutes away. On the islands, extra time is needed to prepare the boat and wait for extra responders, if necessary. Calling 911 right away gets the response started. Calling a number other than 911 is not a good idea. Anyone you call will still need to get in touch with the dispatch center anyway and may not be aware of incidents on the mainland that may affect your response. And don't worry about your privacy. Responders are bound by law not to discuss specific information about your incident.

## When in doubt, call!



**Portland's non-emergency dispatch number is 207-874-8575.**

**If you do call 911...**

**Stay calm.**

**Know the address and the phone number** you are calling from.

**Wait for the call-taker to ask questions**, then answer clearly and calmly.

**Let the call-taker guide the conversation.** He or she is typing the information into a computer and it may seem to be taking forever. The emergency services are usually being sent while you are still on the line.

**Follow all directions.** In some cases, the call-taker will give you directions. Listen carefully, follow each step exactly, and ask for clarification if you don't understand.

**Do not hang up the call** until directed to do so by the call-taker.



Contents courtesy of the Portland Fire Department, 2011.



## *Portland, Maine Islander's Guide to Accessing Emergency Help through 9-1-1*



## When Do I call 911?

An emergency is any situation that requires immediate assistance from the police, fire department or ambulance. Examples include:

- A fire
- A crime, especially if in progress
- A medical emergency, such as someone who is unconscious, gasping for air or not breathing, experiencing an allergic reaction, having chest pain, having uncontrollable bleeding, or any other symptoms that require immediate medical attention

If you're not sure, call.

## When not to call 911?

- To report a power outage
- To check the time
- To test your phone
- For information
- To ask a Police/Fire/Medical Question

## Handy Numbers

All City Departments 207-874-8300  
Police Information Desk 207-874-8479  
Fire Headquarters 207-874 8400  
Casco Bay Lines 207-774-7871



Visit us online at  
[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

## What do I say when I call 911?

Listen carefully to the 911 call-taker...

They will ask,

*What is the address of the emergency?*

*What's the phone number you're calling from?*

*Okay, tell me exactly what happened.*

Based on the nature of the emergency, they will have a few more questions that help the responders determine the best response.

In an emergency, it may seem that the questions are taking a long time. Modern call centers have computer equipment that allow the dispatcher to see the information your call taker is entering at the same time.



## Are you using a cell phone?

Unlike landline calls, cell phone calls are routed to the closet tower. In some cases, it may not be in Portland. The Federal Communications Commission has required that all wireless carriers be able to pinpoint your location for 911 dispatchers, but the rule is coming in phases and there are many exceptions in Maine. Based on your service provider or cell phone model, your call may end up being routed to another call center. If this happens, stay on the line and follow the dispatchers instructions carefully. In addition to your street address, it's very important to add the name of the town or island you're calling from as well. With the correct information, the call-taker will transfer you to the right center very quickly. Responders can only respond if they know where they're going. Make sure you get the location as detailed as possible. Also, be patient if you are asked some of the same questions twice.

## Are you using a VoIP phone?

VoIP phones (Voice over IP) are internet based services like Vonage or Skype or may be offered through your cable company. While you initially provide a 911 address when you register for service, many of these may work with any internet connection and will function wherever you plug them in. Some users bring them when they travel and neglect to update the provider. When you call 911, the address sent to the call center is what the provider has on file and may be different than the location are calling from. Again, be specific about your address and city.