

RESCUE TIPS

Cundy's Harbor Rescue is manned by volunteers. We carry our pagers, jump kits, defibrillators and portable oxygen with us at all times, so that we are always ready to respond promptly. We have one Paramedic on staff, and we also use a mutual aid Paramedic service operated by Mid Coast Hospital in Brunswick. This service, called "MC – 1" monitors our radio traffic, often arriving at the rescue scene as soon as we do. Here are some tips on how you can help us:

BEFORE YOU NEED US

You can pre – plan for the ambulance the same as you do for fires.

- 1) **Help us find you!** Does your driveway or house have a **number** on it? As you come and go from your home, imagine yourself driving an ambulance in a snowstorm at night, trying to find the number. Can it be read from both directions? Is it ever hidden by snow banks or bushes? Does it reflect headlights? Is your **street sign** in good repair? While this is the responsibility of the Town, our street name signs have a tough existence, especially in the winter. Sometimes a sign is tipped over or just plain vanishes. If you notice a problem, please contact the Town Office or Cundy's Harbor Fire Department.
- 2) Keep a list of **medications, drug allergies, and current medical conditions**, for everybody in your household. Even if someone has been to the hospital recently, the hospital doesn't always have the patient's file readily on hand. The emergency room relies on the ambulance service to provide up to date medical information. You can use a **File of Life**, available from Cundy's Harbor Rescue, which is a red plastic note holder with a form you can fill out. The File of Life has a magnetic strip for attaching it to your refrigerator. Another option is to keep a list in your wallet or by your bedside.
- 3) **Pre program your cell phone to 729-8000.** Put this number in your cell's Contacts List under "Ambulance." **Your cell will connect directly to the 9-11 Emergency Desk at the Dispatch Center.**

This requires some explanation! In Maine, there are several regional centers that receive 9-11 calls. If you call 9-11 from your hard wired telephone in Cundy's Harbor (or anywhere in the Town of Harpswell,) it connects you to the Cumberland County Regional Dispatch Center in Windham. The street address, the call – back number, and the name of the occupant all appear on a screen at the dispatcher's desk. These are often vital clues to finding you promptly, especially if you are unable to talk or stay by the phone. Cumberland County Dispatch will "tone" us on our pagers, direct us to you, and pass along your information. **If you have a choice, it is better to use your hard wired phone to call 9-11, instead of your cell phone.**

If you call 9-11 on a cell phone, the cell system is not able to pinpoint your location well enough to send your call to the right Dispatch Center. For example, very often, cell calls from Cundy's Harbor are picked up by a tower in Phippsburg, just across the river from us...but Phippsburg isn't even in the same county as Cundy's Harbor, and they use the Sagadahoc County Dispatch Center. Because of this State wide problem, all 9–11 cell phone calls in Maine go to the Maine State Police. The State Police will ask you where you are, and they will contact the appropriate Dispatch Center. We will learn about your

problem, but there can sometimes be a significant delay. Also, information can be lost, because you will not get to talk directly to the people who will be sending us out. As a solution, we have a 7 digit number, **729 – 8000**, which used to be our emergency number before the 9-11 system came on line; we never discontinued it. **If you dial 729 – 8000 from a cell** (or a hard wired phone,) **it will go directly to the Cumberland County Dispatch Center.** Your location, call back number, and name won't come up on the screen, but you'll be in touch with the right people without having to go through the State Police. **Program your cell phone to 729-8000 under "Ambulance!"**

WHEN YOU NEED US

- 1) **Call promptly.** Everything is better when you call sooner. We don't bill for our response; we are very happy to come and have a look; and if nothing is the matter, we will agree to go away. In general, if you think that maybe you need an ambulance, it's time to call.
- 2) **Call 9-11 if you are using a telephone.** The 9-11 system automatically displays the address of your hard wired phone on a computer screen at the Dispatch Center. If you are unable to talk, or if you pass out, the Dispatch Center will know where to send the ambulance.
- 3) **Call 729-8000 if you are using a cell phone.** Someday soon, GIS tracking will make it possible for the cell system to know the location of a 9-11 call. For now, all 9-11 calls that come in by cell are directed to the Maine State Police, who take the information and then forward it to our Dispatcher. This can cause significant confusion and delay. 729-8000 is the emergency number we used before we had 9-11; and it was never disconnected when we went to the new system. Your call will ring at the same desk as if you were calling 9-11 from a hard wired phone, and you will speak directly to the 9-11 Dispatcher.
- 4) **Expect some questions.** The Dispatcher will ask what your emergency is, and then ask you to verify your location. Then he or she will ask a series of questions – is the person breathing? Are they conscious? If your answer to either of these is "no," the questions will pause and the ambulance will be sent immediately. In any event, there will be more questions. This system is called "Emergency Medical Dispatch." It is designed to get as much information for the ambulance as possible, so that we are well informed by the time we arrive. Also, if important first aid has to be done before the ambulance arrives (such as CPR) the dispatcher will stay on the line and give you instructions.

WHILE YOU ARE WAITING

There are several things you can do before the ambulance arrives, to help everything go smoothly.

- 1) **Catch your dog or cat.** Pets can be unnerved by the sudden arrival of strangers who don't behave like typical guests. For everyone's safety, this is a good time to usher the dog, cat, parrot, ferret, etc. into a different room.
- 2) **Post a guide.** It is very helpful to have someone to show us the way. Whether you send someone to the curb to wave us in, or put them in a car at a confusing intersection in the woods, the guidance is always appreciated.

- 3) **Clear the driveway.** The ambulance will want to back up close to your door. If you have cars in your driveway, this is a good time to pull them out onto the street.
- 4) **Listen for the phone.** Dispatch might need to call you back, especially if we are having trouble finding your house.
- 5) **Collect some information.** Whether we are coming to treat a nosebleed or a major heart attack, we always need to know the same things: The patient's complete name, their age and date of birth, their current medical conditions, what medicines they take, and what allergies they have. If you don't have this written down already in a **File of Life** or some other list, now is a good time to pull it together.
- 6) **Clear the path.** If someone is feeling too weak to walk, which is often the case when you need the ambulance, we will roll a stretcher to their bedside. Now is a good time to look for the easiest way through the house, and maybe shift some furniture to make it easier.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- 1) **First Responders.** In a city or suburb, the first thing you usually see is the ambulance itself. In a rural volunteer service, we all drop what we are doing and respond; if one of us is very close to your house, you might see an EMT arrive in a car ahead of the ambulance. Or, a firefighter may arrive in a car but not go inside. He or she will be marking your location and talking to the ambulance by radio, to guide us in.
- 2) **Assessment.** Before we move anyone to the ambulance, we always find out as much as we can about their overall health and the source of the emergency. In addition to gathering all the **File of Life** information, we take vital signs, and sometimes do simple tests such as blood sugar. In a dire emergency, we do these steps very quickly. Otherwise we will spend several minutes assessing our patient.
- 3) **The Stretcher.** If someone is feeling too weak to walk, as is often the case, we will roll a stretcher to their bedside. If you didn't have a chance to clear a pathway before the ambulance arrived, we will want to (carefully!) shift some furniture to make way.
- 4) **Pause in the driveway.** Sometimes we will pause in the driveway to do a treatment before we begin to drive to the hospital. For example, if we want to start an intravenous line, and the patient can afford the extra minute or two of waiting, we like to do that before the ambulance starts to move.

ACCIDENTS

If you need the ambulance because someone has had an accident, here are several things to consider:

- **Don't move a hurt person** unless they would be in immediate danger by staying where they are, and you can move them without becoming a victim yourself; or their position makes it impossible for them to breathe. If you must move a hurt person, make every effort to protect their neck from any movement.
- **Keep them warm.** Cover with a blanket to fend off shock.
- **Stay safe.** Look carefully at the situation, and avoid becoming a victim yourself. All electrical wires are unsafe, as are roadways, fires, broken ice, and confined spaces such as wells, septic systems, and ship holds.