

# Maine Public Utilities Commission



EUT Committee Orientation

January 28, 2025

# Emergency Services Communication Bureau (ESCB)

# ESCB History



- Created in 1993 as a Bureau under the Department of Public Safety
- Moved to the Commission in 2003
- Staff of 10
- Charged with implementing & managing Statewide 911 System

# The Emergency Services Communication Bureau At A Glance

The Emergency Services Communication Bureau (ESCB) manages the statewide 911 system, which is the component of the emergency response system that delivers 911 calls and displays the telephone number and physical location of the caller at one of Maine's Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).

Implements & manages  
Statewide 911 system  
(Consolidated  
Communications is the  
system's service provider)

Provides dispatcher and  
PSAP call-taker training

Provides Public Service  
Announcements on use  
of 911 and texting to  
911

GIS and Community  
Addressing

# ESCB's Responsibilities

## Contract Management

- Manage 911 Contract with the service provider (Consolidated) for provider-owned components of the 911 system including:
  - Network
  - Statewide databases
  - 911 equipment at PSAPs
  - Maintenance of all system components

## Training & Education

- Basic dispatcher training, training of all PSAP call takers on 911 equipment & emergency medical dispatch (EMD) & fire protocols, teleprinter/teletype (TTY) call handling training
  - Protocols training prepares 911 call takers to determine appropriate dispatch response & to assist callers by providing life saving instructions such as CPR while waiting for emergency responders
  - Sponsor additional continuing education courses

## Public Education

- Website – Which includes information for children in dealing with 911 emergencies
- Press releases
- Public service announcements
- Social Media



<https://www.maine.gov/maine911/>

# Funding

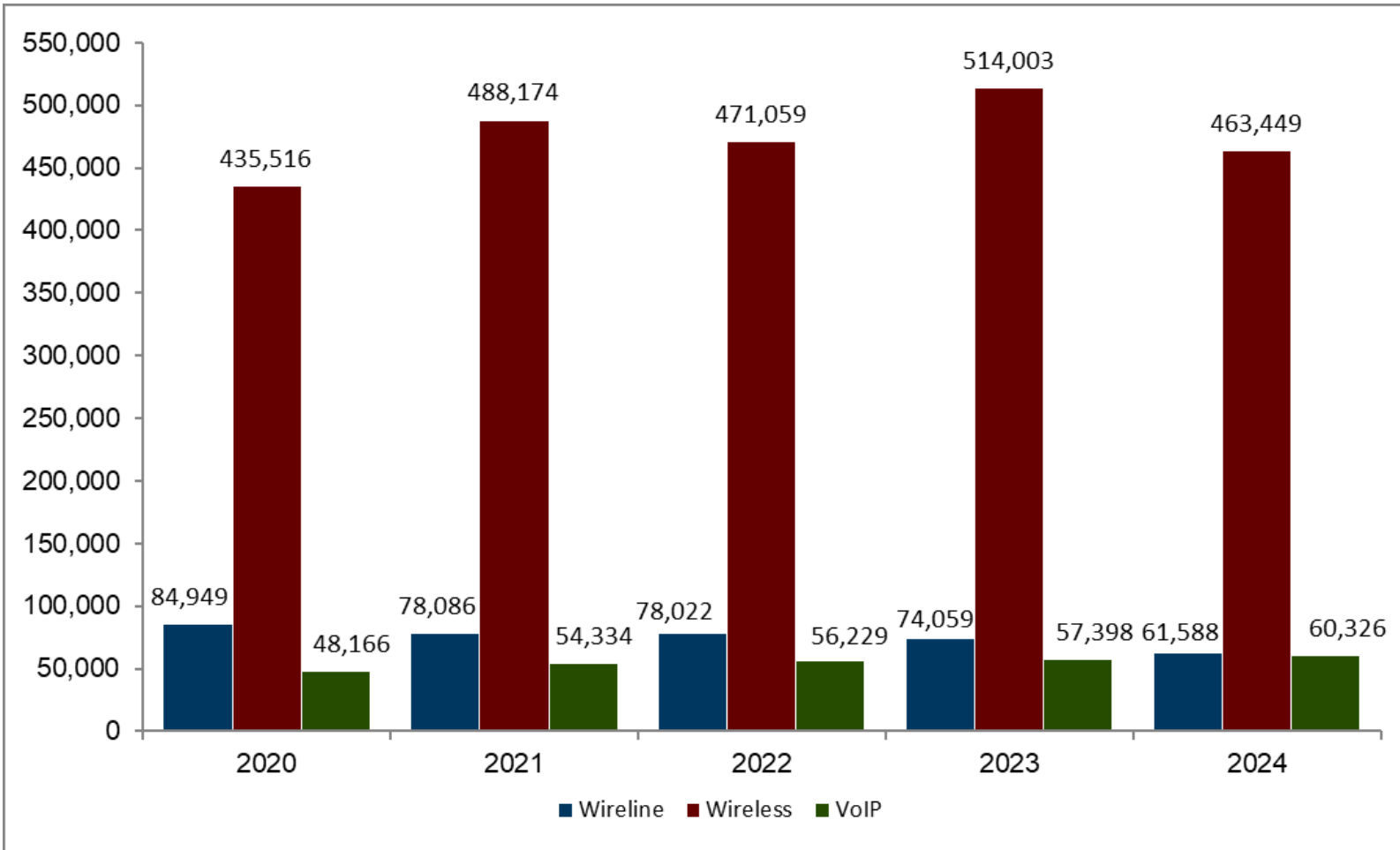
## The Emergency Services Communications Fund (E-9-1-1 Fund)

- Surcharge on Wireline, wireless (cellular) and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone bills of \$0.35 per line/per month
- Prepaid Wireless - Assessed \$0.35 at the point of sale (e.g., pay when purchase card with more minutes at retail stores)

## What Does the Surcharge Fund?

- Staff and to defray costs associated with the implementation, operation and management of E-9-1-1
- The 911 equipment at PSAPs & training of call takers
- Standardized dispatch protocols software, printed materials (card sets) for EMD & EFD
- Grants to dispatch-only centers for nonrecurring costs associated with their consolidation into PSAPs
- Quality assurance review

# Industry Trends



- Wireless phones have accounted for the largest portion of payments of the E911 surcharge.
- Fees collected from wireline phones continue a downward trend.
- The Commission will review the surcharge again in 2025 to determine the appropriate surcharge to meet operational needs.
- In 2024, 79 percent of all calls to 911 came from wireless phones.

# Location Based Routing of Wireless Calls

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June 2024 - The ESCB completed deployment of Location Based Routing (LBR) with the big three wireless carriers – T-Mobile, AT&T and Verizon.

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LBR uses the location information from the mobile phone to route a 911 call to the correct PSAP, rather than tower location.

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The goal of this initiative is to increase the likelihood of a caller reaching the correct PSAP for the location of the caller.

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When a wireless 911 voice call is misrouted, the answering telecommunicator must transfer the call to the PSAP of jurisdiction, which delays the dispatch of first responders.

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There were nearly 9,000 fewer transfers of wireless calls in 2024 than 2023.

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The ESCB negotiated a contract extension for Next Generation 911 Services with Consolidated Services, the current provider, through June 2030.

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The overarching objective of the agreement is to maintain all the functionality provided by the existing system while introducing:

- \* New technology,
- \* Features and functionality that will align the system with current National Emergency Number Association (NENA) i3 standards; and
- \* Create a platform capable of supporting new standards as the standards evolve.

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Preparation for the transition to the new system began in 2024 and is expected to be completed in June 2025.

# 911 Contract

# Integration Of 9-8-8 And 9-1-1 (Crisis Response Services)

- Integration of crisis response services into 911 continued to move forward on a voluntary basis.
- An online training course was launched to help familiarize 911 call takers with the stakeholder developed policy, *Call Receipt, Acknowledgement, and Transfer of Behavior Health Calls* and provide examples of how to apply the procedures in the policy.
- For a PSAP to use the policy, it must first both adopt the policy and have all its call takers complete the training. As of December 31, 2024
  - 218 of approximately 482 licensed and practicing Emergency Medical Dispatchers have completed the training;
  - Another 10 have started but not yet completed it
  - 12 PSAPs report they have implemented the policy
- Maine's medical dispatch protocol vendor now has an additional protocol for behavioral health – currently in the process of implementing this protocol

# Activities Since the Enactment of P.L. 2023, ch. 609 (Act)

## PSAP and Dispatch Center Annual Cost Reporting

- The Act requires that PSAP and dispatch centers provide an annual report to the ESCB on the costs incurred for the provision of 911 services.
- It further requires the ESCB to develop rules to implement this requirement.
- Rulemaking was initiated on January 7, 2025 – Docket No. 2024-00237.

## Quality Assurance Review Support

- The ESCB was required to contract with a 3rd-party vendor, using revenues in the E-9-1-1 fund, to provide quality assurance review for PSAPs to meet the requirements of emergency medical dispatch and emergency fire dispatch rules and laws.
- To date, 12 PSAPs have taken advantage of this service.

## PSAP Staffing Stakeholder Group

- The ESCB was required to convene a stakeholder group to develop a coordinated staffing and recruiting effort for all PSAPs.
- The ESCB will file a report on the progress of this group separately by February 10, 2025.

# New Training Center

In December 2023, the ESCB moved its administrative offices and training center to 45 Commerce Drive, Augusta.

The training center expands opportunities to provide more frequent training in a centralized location.



# Telephone and Water Division

# Telephone/ Telecommunications

# Commission's Regulatory Oversight

## What We Regulate



Provider of Last Resort Service

## What We Do Not Regulate



Cell Phone  
Service



Cable  
Television



Internet/  
Broadband

# Commission's Authority

## The Commission:

- Regulates Provider of Last Resort (POLR) service
  - Offered by Maine's incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs);
  - Provides consumers with the option of receiving basic telephone service at a flat rate within a basic calling area;
  - Provides access to emergency services, operator services, long-distance service, directory assistance, and a toll limitation option for low-income customers.
- Has jurisdiction over the enforcement of certain provisions of Federal telecommunications statutes related to wholesale telephone services and the interactions between competitive providers of telecommunications services.
- Has the authority to certify competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) that wish to operate in Maine, but it does not regulate their service.
- Administer MTEAF and MUSF.
- Oversees the installation of Public Interest Payphone (PIP) sites across Maine. The annual cost of the PIP program, which currently includes 33 PIPs, is approximately \$28,000 and is funded by the Maine Universal Service Fund (MUSF).

# Information Regarding POLR Service



- Increasing competition and other factors, has resulted in the reduction of ILEC access lines and POLR service subscribers.
- There has been a noticeable reduction of POLR service subscribers in recent years and now the Commission estimates that fewer than 10% of ILEC customers opt for POLR service.
- If a POLR customer adds an advanced service such as voice mail or a broadband bundle, they are no longer considered a POLR customer.
- Consumers can obtain long distance service from a variety of sources, including VoIP technology offered by cable television providers, mobile wireless service, and cable for traditional wireline service.

# Maine Telecommunications Education Access Fund (MTEAF) And Maine Universal Service Fund (MUSF)

## MTEAF

- MTEAF collects funds from voice network service providers operating in the State.
- Provides funding that allows Networkmaine (an entity within the University of Maine System) to operate the Maine School and Library Network (MSLN).
- The MSLN provides qualified schools and libraries in the State high-speed Internet access, content databases, search capabilities, content filtering, and training.
- In 2024, the Commission approved the amount of up to \$4,099,348 from the MTEAF's 2023-2024 fiscal year budget.

## MUSF

- Supports universal service and reasonable rates.
- The MUSF distributes approximately \$7.4 million annually to ensure that POLR service is available in all areas of the State at reasonable rates by providing support from the MUSF to eligible providers.
- Support for the Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). In 2024, the Commission transferred \$433,696 from the MUSF to support TRS.
- \$85,000 annually from the MUSF to the Communications Equipment Fund (CEF).
- Commission is required to annually transfer \$40,000 from the MUSF to the Blind and Visually Impaired News Access Fund
- \$28,000 to support the PIP program.

# Importance of Preserving Area Codes

Maine is one of only 11 states that still has only one area code, but the entire country is impacted by limited numbering resources and the entire North American Numbering system could run out of area codes by 2051.

Should that happen, current phone systems that utilize the standard 10-digit telephone number would need to be re-programmed to a 12-digit number, which could cost up to \$270 billion by some FCC estimates.

# Maine's Efforts to Preserve the 207 Area Code



The Commission has been actively preserving the 207 area code over the past several years through robust enforcement of numbering regulations as the volume of numbering requests has significantly increased.



The Commission took a recent major step that could potentially extend the life of Maine's single area code for decades by approving large-scale rate center consolidation of Maine's largest telecommunications provider, Consolidated Communications Northern New England Company, LLC.



Consolidation would combine over 100 calling areas into one company-wide calling area, resulting in the reduced demand for numbering resources and allowing telephone providers to utilize more existing resources.



Maine is leading the way in reforming numbering practices nationwide by the steps the Commission has taken to preserve the 207 area code.

## 207 Area Code

According to a semi-annual review by the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) the predicated exhaust date for the 207 area code has changed as follows:

- 2025 in January 2021;
- Early 2029 in April 2023;
- 2032 in October 2023; and
- The fourth quarter of 2033 in October 2024.

# Pole Attachments



- Over the past nine years the Commission has systematically undertaken comprehensive modernization of the state's pole attachment rules to address the evolving telecommunications landscape and facilitate broadband expansion.
- During that time, the Commission has conducted several inquiries to gather information from stakeholders and, based on that feedback, has amended its pole attachment rules four times.
- Through its deliberate and iterative process of inquiries and rulemakings, the Commission has built a foundation for robust broadband expansion, positioning Maine to address connectivity gaps effectively.

# Water Utilities

# Commission's Regulatory Oversight

## What We Regulate



Water Utilities

## What We Do Not Regulate



Sewer  
Service



Drinking  
Water Quality

# Various Roles Related to the Regulation of Water

The Commission is charged with oversight of the rates and services of water utilities.

In 2024, the Commission received 86 new water cases, which included rate cases, issue of securities, revisions of non-rate-related terms and conditions, infrastructure surcharge filings, and other requests.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Drinking Water Program regulates water quality through the administration of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The Department of Environmental Protection also oversees some water utility issues such as regulations protecting water sources.

# Commission's Water Utility Oversight



- The Commission regulates 152 water utilities in Maine, which include both investor and consumer-owned utilities.
- Consumer-owned water utilities are water departments, which are a division or department of a city or town, or districts, which are municipal or quasi-municipal entities governed by municipal officials or elected or appointed boards of trustees.
- Water utilities, whether investor-owned or consumer-owned, are generally created by private and special laws (charters) enacted by the Legislature.
- These charters establish corporate (territorial) limits, grant powers, define authority and responsibilities and specify other provisions and criteria which govern the administration and operation of the water utility.

# Costs for Infrastructure Improvements



- Much of the infrastructure currently used to deliver water service flows through pipes that were installed in response to growth and economic development in the late 1800s through the post-World War II period.
- A significant portion of system components, including piping, are becoming antiquated at approximately the same time.
- The Maine Drinking Water Program estimates that over the next 20 years, an investment of approximately \$1.3 billion is needed to fund water infrastructure replacement in Maine.
- In 2024, the Commission approved system infrastructure surcharges related to infrastructure investments totaling \$1.9 million.
- Significant infrastructure investments will also be needed to meet testing and treatment needs required by federal drinking water quality standards.
- Water utilities can recover the cost of new infrastructure through rates over the life of the plant and consumer-owned water utilities are also able to include in rates the full debt repayment for such projects.
- Water infrastructure is expensive and the pumping and treatment facilities necessary to serve a hundred customers are roughly the same cost as those needed to serve a thousand customers.
- Due to the cost and scope of water systems, replacement of water infrastructure can present significant financial challenges to water utilities and in some cases can drive substantial rate increases to water utility customers.

# Updates Relating To P.L. 2023, ch. 325

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P.L. 2023, ch. 325 created a mechanism to allow consumer-owned water utilities to propose an annual rate adjustment of up to 1.5%.

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This expedited process only requires that notice be provided to the Commission, to the Public Advocate and to the utility's customers.

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Notice must include a statement describing the amount of the rate adjustment, the percentage change for each customer class and a brief explanation of the reason for the rate adjustment.

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This provision has been successful in allowing, especially smaller consumer-owned utilities, to do small rate increases to keep up with inflation..

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The Act also created a process for utility consolidation. While, this process has not yet been used, it has been successful in facilitating dialogue between the Commission and the utilities.



The Commission has recently increased its outreach efforts to assist water utilities with the many challenges they are facing.



Commission Staff are making themselves available to utilities, and in particular small consumer-owned water utilities, as a resource to answer questions about their options to maximize revenue while keeping rates just and reasonable.



Commission Staff have also been attending water trade shows and other industry events, coordinating communication strategies with industry groups, and providing industry training regarding utility regulation in Maine.



The Commission recently hired a Public Engagement Liaison to be a first point of contact for utilities with questions about these options and Commission regulation and proceedings generally.

## Commission's Outreach Efforts



[www.Maine.gov/MPUC](http://www.Maine.gov/MPUC)



[www.Facebook.com/MainePUC](http://www.Facebook.com/MainePUC)



[www.Twitter.com/Maine\\_PUC](http://www.Twitter.com/Maine_PUC)

We look forward to serving as a resource during your legislative sessions in 2025 and 2026.