Calling for Help in an Emergency

In an emergency, the ability to call for help quickly and effectively can mean the difference between minor property damage and total devastation, or even between life and death. Each year, nearly 240 million emergency calls are made to 9-1-1, according to the National Emergency Number Association. Many more calls are made to other local emergency numbers in places where 9-1-1 is not available. Calling for help is a critical life skill for all adults. This lesson prepares students to know how and when to call 9-1-1 or a local emergency number.

Read the “Emergency: Call for Help” tip sheet with students. Then, complete the role play activity “Activity: Practice Calling for Help”. After you have completed the activity, use the discussion questions to talk about the experience in small groups or with the entire class.

Instructor Tip 1: A generic operator script is provided for the 9-1-1 call activity, but you may want to modify it with specific questions or terminology used by 9-1-1 operators in your community. Call the non-emergency number for your local fire department or emergency call center, explain your lesson plan, and ask for recommendations to help you customize the script. Many call centers also have informational materials readily available. If the call center provides community education on a regular basis, a staff member may even be able to visit your class to help with the lesson.

Instructor Tip 2: Be prepared to help students look up the emergency number they should use where they live. 9-1-1 is not available in every area. Check on the Internet or in a phone book. If you are unsure, ask a reference librarian at the local community library for assistance.
Emergency: Call for Help

Words to Review
Here are some words you will see in the reading and activities. Say the words and discuss their meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9-1-1</th>
<th>emergency</th>
<th>operator</th>
<th>landmark</th>
<th>cell phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>local emergency number</td>
<td>meeting place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When to Call
Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number if there is an emergency and you need urgent help from firefighters or police or you need an ambulance.

Three examples of emergencies:
• There is a fire in your neighbor’s home.
• A person you don’t know is trying to enter your home.
• Someone in your family is having a heart attack.

How to Call
1. Pick up the phone. If you are using a landline, listen for a dial tone.
2. Dial 9-1-1 or the emergency number in your area.
3. Wait for the operator to answer the phone.
4. Tell the operator what the emergency is and where you are.
5. Listen carefully to all the operator’s questions. Try to answer the questions.
6. Stay on the phone until the operator tells you it is okay to hang up.

If there is a fire in your home, call for help from a cell phone or a neighbor’s home AFTER you have escaped from your home AND checked in at your meeting place.

What number should you call?
In most places, you should call 9-1-1 for help in an emergency. In some places, you should call a local emergency number instead of 9-1-1. Do you know what number to call in your community?

If you do not know the number, ask your teacher to help you find it. Put the emergency number near each phone in your home. If you have a cell phone, put the number in your contact list.
**Tips for Calling for Help**

- Stay calm.
- Speak slowly, loudly, and clearly.
- Answer all of the operator’s questions.
- Know landmarks (like public buildings or parks) or cross streets near your home. Give this information to the operator to make it easier for people to find you in an emergency.
- If you are not staying in your own home, make sure you know the address in case there is an emergency.
- If you do not speak English well, tell the operator what language you want to use. If an interpreter is available, he or she will help you and the operator talk to each other.
- Do not hang up until the operator tells you to hang up.

*Only call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number in a real emergency!*

*If you call 9-1-1 by mistake, do not hang up.*
**Activity: Practice Calling for Help**

**Purpose**
Students practice calling 9-1-1 or a local emergency number for help. This activity also helps improve communication, comprehension, and practical life skills.

**Materials**
- A disconnected landline phone or a cell phone with the battery removed *(Note: Even if a cell phone is deactivated, it can be used to call 9-1-1. This is why it is important to remove the battery. Otherwise, students can just pretend they are dialing 9-1-1 without really dialing it.)*
- A copy of the script for each person.

**Roles:**
- The instructor is the operator.
- The student is the caller.

If class size prohibits one-on-one work with an instructor, students may pair up and take turns playing the role of the caller and the operator.

**Instructor guidance:**
1) The caller dials 9-1-1 or the local emergency number using the disconnected phone.
2) Use the script guide and the “Emergency: Call for Help” tip sheet to guide the call.
3) Discuss the activity with the class or in small groups using the questions provided.

This activity focuses on fire emergencies, but it can be modified to address other reasons a student would need to call 9-1-1. Here are a few examples of the other types of questions the operator might ask.

**Car Accident**
- Is anyone hurt?
- How many cars were involved?
- How many people were involved?
- Is anyone trapped inside a car?
- Are any of the cars on fire?

**Medical Emergency**
- What are the symptoms?
- Does the patient have any known medical problems?
- How old is the patient?
- How long have the symptoms been going on?

**Crime**
- Is anyone hurt?
- When did the crime happen? Is it happening right now?
- Did the suspect(s) have any weapons?
- Was the suspect walking or driving a car?
- What direction did he or she go?
Practice Calling for Help

Instructions
- Use a disconnected landline phone or a cell phone with the battery removed.
- “Dial” 9-1-1 or your local emergency number.
- Your instructor or another student will ask you questions using the script below. These are the questions the operator will ask if you call for help in a real emergency. The operator’s questions are in bold.
- In a real emergency, give similar answers that tell the emergency and give your address, name, and phone number.

Call Script

1. Operator: “Nine-one-one. What is your emergency?”
   Caller: “There is a fire in my neighbor’s house.”

2. Operator: “What is the location of the emergency?”
   Caller: “The fire is at 100 West Avenue. The house is yellow. It is across from Central Park.”

3. Operator: “Where are you right now?”
   Caller: “I am in my driveway at 102 West Avenue. My neighbor is with me. My house is next to the house that is on fire. It is a white house.”

4. Operator: “What is your name?”
   Caller: “My name is Sarah Smith.”

5. Operator: “What is your phone number?”
   Caller: “I am using my cell phone. The number is 555-123-4567.”
Call Script (continued)

6. Operator: “Is everyone out of the home?”
   Caller: “My neighbor said her brother is sleeping in his bedroom on the second floor. He is still inside.”

7. Operator: “Stay outside. Do NOT go back into the home. Tell your neighbor to stay outside with you. The fire department will be there soon to help.”

8. Operator: “How old is the person who is still in the home?”
   Caller: “He is around 20 years old.”

9. Operator: “Do you know where the fire started?”
   Caller: “We don’t know, but it looks like it is in the kitchen. There are flames and smoke coming from the kitchen window.”

10. Operator: “Stay calm and don’t hang up. Help is on the way.”
   Caller: “Ok.”

   Two minutes later...

11. Caller: “The fire trucks are here.”
   Operator: “Stay in your driveway. Someone will come and talk to you. We can hang up now.”
Calling for Help - Discussion Questions

1. How did you feel when you were calling the emergency number?

2. How do you think you will feel if you have to call for help in a real emergency?

3. Did you remember everything you needed to tell the operator?

4. Have you called for help in an emergency before? If yes, what was it like?

5. Children should also know when and how to call for help. How can you practice this activity at home with your children?