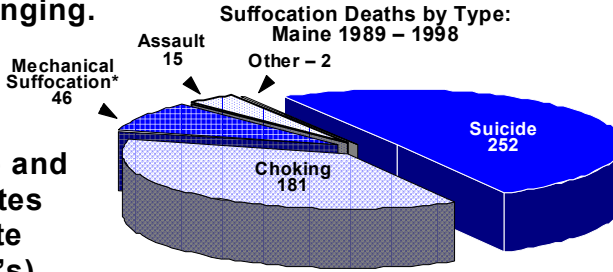


DEATHS DUE TO SUFFOCATION

Maine Residents: 1989 - 1998 (preliminary)

- ➔ During 1989 – 1998, 496 Maine residents died from suffocation. More than half of those deaths (252) were suicides. Ninety percent of those suicides (225) resulted from hanging.
- ➔ The statewide death rate for suffocation was 3.3 deaths/100,000 population, a rate comparable to the national rate and to most other New England states (Massachusetts had a death rate significantly higher than Maine's).
- ➔ The death rate due to suffocation for males (5.3 deaths) was nearly 4 times the death rate for females (1.4 deaths).
- ➔ Nearly 40% of all suffocation deaths occurred to Maine residents 65 years old and older, however the percentage varied significantly by sex; 30% of male suffocation deaths were to those older than age 64 while 60% of female suffocation deaths were in that age group.
- ➔ Maine's oldest residents, those aged 85 years old and older, had the highest suffocation death rate of any age group in the state – 36.6 deaths/100,000 population. Most of those deaths (88%) were the result of accidental choking.
- ➔ Maine males, 84 years old and older, experienced a death rate (66.3 deaths) significantly higher than for their counterparts nationally (42.8).
- ➔ Twenty three children younger than 5 years old died from suffocation. Three quarters of these deaths were the result of mechanical suffocation*; the remainder resulted from food obstructions or assault. Sixteen children who suffocated were younger than 1 year old.



NUMBER OF SUFFOCATION DEATHS BY TYPE AND AGE GROUP: MAINE, 1989 – 1998

Age	Suicide	Choking	Mechanical Suffocation*	Assault	Other
<5		3	18	2	
5-9		1	3		
10-19	30	1	6	1	1
20-34	84	7	8	5	
35-54	80	15	6	4	1
55-74	38	34	3	2	
75-84	13	57	1		
=85	7	63	1	1	

Notes: Suffocation deaths are deaths attributed to ICD-9 cause of death codes 911, 912, 913-913, 953, 963, 983. All rates are for underlying cause of death, and are age-adjusted to the US 1940 standard population; these are rates that have been standardized to eliminate differences due solely to variations in the age composition of the populations. All national data (national data are for whites only) were obtained from CDC Wonder. Unless noted, differences in rates are not statistically significant, i.e., they could be accounted for by chance alone.

* Mechanical suffocation is unintentional and is caused by a lack of oxygen due to external means such as plastic bags, being closed up in a refrigerator, cave-ins, accidental hanging, etc.

For further data on this topic, please contact:
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 The contact person is: Cathy St. Pierre - (207) 624-5445 624-5895 (TTY)

Visit our website at: <http://janus.state.me.us/dhs/bohodr>

For prevention information, please contact: Cheryl DiCara at 287-5362

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MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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SUFFOCATIONS
MAINE: 1989-1998
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