

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Enhance Availability of Emergency Telephone Services**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §7109** is enacted to read:

### **§ 7109. Soft dial tone**

**1. Definitions.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Local exchange carrier" means all wireline incumbent and competitive local exchange carriers authorized to provide service in the State.

B. "Soft dial tone" means the continuation of providing emergency 9-1-1 access to customer premises when telephone service has been otherwise disconnected for any reason.

**2. Provision of soft dial tone.** A local exchange carrier shall continue to provide emergency 9-1-1 access to a residential customer premises if the local exchange carrier was the last carrier to provide telephone service to that premises. This requirement applies to all telephone lines no longer in service, including, but not limited to, lines that were disconnected due to nonpayment for service and lines that were disconnected at the request of the customer for any reason.

**3. Standard of service.** A local exchange carrier shall provide the standard level of enhanced 9-1-1 emergency access when providing soft dial tone.

**4. Duration of obligation.** A local exchange carrier shall continue to provide soft dial tone service on every line that it previously served until such time as regular telephone service is restored on that line by that local exchange carrier or another local exchange carrier.

**5. Exceptions.** The following are exceptions to this section.

A. A local exchange carrier is not obligated to provide soft dial tone if the provision under subsection 2 requires special construction of facilities solely to provide emergency access.

B. A local exchange carrier that is unable to provide enhanced 9-1-1 service at a particular location without significant investment for that location shall provide nonenhanced 9-1-1 emergency service if that service can be provided without significant investment.

C. Soft dial tone is not required if the premises is vacant and scheduled to be demolished.

D. Soft dial tone is not required to be provided to a multiline premises if one or more lines are in service.

**6. Notice to customer.** Each local exchange carrier shall inform its customers at least once per year that all primary residential lines are entitled to continuous access to enhanced 9-1-1 emergency service, even after regular service has been terminated. The notice must also be provided as part of any disconnection notice from a local exchange carrier to its customer.

## SUMMARY

This bill provides that so-called “soft dial tone” continues to be made available even after regular telephone service is disconnected. The bill also provides consistency between wireline and wireless carriers in that wireless telephones currently preserve access to emergency service even after the disconnection of a service plan.