In 2016, there were 20 deaths in Maine that were directly attributed to a fall on the stairs. Half of the people who died from a fall on the stairs in Maine were between 75 and 84.

In 2016, there were 12,000 deaths in the US attributed, at least in part, to a fall. Falling down stairs was listed as the direct cause of death for 2,334 of those deaths.

Looking at the deaths per 100,000 population in specific age groups, the highest rate of death is for people 85+.

Nationally, 0.7 people per 100,000 population died from a fall on the stairs in 2016. Maine has the fifth highest rate in the nation:

- West Virginia: 2.4
- Wisconsin: 1.9
- New Hampshire: 1.8
- Pennsylvania: 1.6
- Maine: 1.5

**Acknowledgments**
This brochure is made possible through a generous grant from the Bingham Program.

**Collaborating Partner Organizations:**

**For more information contact:**
Alpha One
alphaonenow.org
207.619.9281
800.640.7200
Handrails
Handrails are required at stairs and ramps that are steeper than 1 in 20 (1:20/5%) with a rise greater than 6 inches. Handrails that are installed correctly at stairs and ramps are essential for people who need them for safety and stability.

Handrail Requirements*
1. Have continuous gripping surfaces on both sides of stairs and ramps at all public buildings at a height of 34-38 inches; best practice for single family homes.
2. Have easy-to-grip handrail surfaces with minimal obstructions; round gripping surface with 1.25-2 inch outside diameter or non-circular perimeter of 4-6.25 inches with rounded edges.
   - People of all ages benefit from comfortable handrail surfaces that provide a firm grip to maintain balance.
3. Have a minimum knuckle clearance of 2.25 inches from adjacent surfaces.
4. Have handrail extensions 12 inches horizontal past the top of stairs and ramps, and bottom of ramps; extend handrails 1 tread depth past bottom step.
   - Handrails extensions improve stability for users to continue to grip the rail as they move onto or off the different surfaces.
5. Have handrail extensions returned to a post or wall to prevent clothing or bags from getting caught.
6. Additional handrail code requirements:
   - Have a minimum clearance of 36 inches between handrails.
   - Have 42 inch guard protection over height of 30 inches above the ground/floor.
   - Have 4 inch edge protection to prevent a cane or caster from sliding off of the edge.
7. Additional suggestions:
   - Be finished to contrast in color for people with low vision.
   - Be made of a material that will not get hot in direct sunlight.

Resources
Refer to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC) for more detailed information on the requirements or exceptions for your home or business handrail requirements.

Accessibility Resources in Maine
Alpha One
www.alphaonenow.org
800.640.7200
Disability Rights Maine
www.drme.org
800.452.1948
Office of the State Fire Marshal
www.maine.gov/dps/fmo/
207.626.3870
Maine Human Rights Commission
www.maine.gov/mhrc/
207.624.6290

Additional Accessibility Resources
A business has a continuing obligation to remove architectural barriers in existing facilities when it is “readily achievable” (“easily accomplishable without much difficulty or expense”). This requirement is based on the size and resources of a business, it will vary from business to business, and sometimes from one year to the next.

US Access Board Guide to Ramps
www.access-board.gov
ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal by the New England ADA Center
www.adachecklist.org

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*The information included in this brochure is provided as a general resource; users should verify all local code requirements before applying it to a specific building.