

City of Chico 9-1-1 Safety Pals

In the early 1980s the school programs consisted of Fire Inspector Norm Stump and Fire Marshal Larry Agee delivering fire prevention messages to children. Beginning in the early 1990s, the program began to attract additional members from the department. Mort Myers and Dave Conway brought characters such as "Careless Carl", "Sinkers" and "Spuds" to life and "Fire Pup" made his debut appearance. During these years, fire prevention and "Call 9-1-1" remained the focus of the programs. In 1996, Marie Fickert joined the department to address the increasing needs for public education and information. In 1997, the group formed the Chico 9-1-1 Safety PALS (Prevention And Life Safety) modeled after a successful program from the Eureka (CA) Fire Department. The group was formed to improve the delivery of programs and increase the audience reached.

As the audience of the Chico 9-1-1 Safety PALS program grew, the scope of the messages presented grew. A partnership was formed with Trish Beckman of the Chico Police Department and Ranger Bob Donohue of the Chico Parks Department. In 2000, Michelle Pease joined the group and brought her creative puppeteering skills to round out the group with clowns, characters, and puppets. The inclusion of additional agencies allowed a wider variety of safety messages to be brought to our young audience. Today, the Chico 9-1-1 Safety Pals has grown with additional departments, including members of the Prevention & Life Safety Bureau, Information Systems, Volunteer Company 1 Firefighters, and interns from Chico State University and Butte Community College. The 9-1-1 Safety Pals provide approximately 26 school programs each year, reaching an estimated 4,500 to 5,000 children. Programs include messages about water safety, bike and skateboard safety, vehicle and train safety, outdoor safety (sun protection, camping, etc.), park rules and environmental protection, personal safety while on the Internet, burn prevention, and fire and life safety messages. Future programs will include ambulance personnel from First Responder EMS and Enloe Health Systems with health messages and representatives from the American Red Cross with disaster preparedness messages.

From its beginnings as an "in house" program designed to present fire prevention messages to children in our schools, the Chico 9-1-1 Safety Pals has grown into a multi-organizational group providing a wide variety of safety messages pertinent to today's youth.

~ Your City of Chico 9-1-1 Safety Pals

