

# Fairfax County Emergency Medical Service Transport Billing Fact Sheet

Emergency Medical Service (EMS) transport billing is scheduled to begin on April 1, 2005 in Fairfax County. Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is committed to a “**service first**” philosophy and strives to provide the finest emergency medical services possible.

**No one will ever be denied service based on ability to pay or for lack of health insurance.** The billing program is based on a concern for the medical and financial health of county residents. It is designed to minimize out-of-pocket costs for county residents by waiving any co-pays or deductibles after a patient’s insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid have been billed for transport services. Uninsured residents will be shown compassion and provided with the option of submitting a waiver form, ensuring financial hardship is avoided. There will be no charge for emergency medical care if the patient is not transported. Patients who reside outside of the county will be expected to meet their co-payment and deductible obligations, but will be treated with compassion concerning their financial obligations.

As a combined career and volunteer department, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department makes every effort to provide service that is second-to-none. When residents need help, they should call **9-1-1** without hesitation. Firefighters and advanced life support providers have been given the best possible equipment and training to ensure the safety and well-being of residents and visitors.



The Department’s Guiding Principles for this program govern its strong commitment to all Fairfax County residents and visitors.

## Guiding Principles

- **Ability to pay will never be considered when providing service. No one will suffer financial hardship as a result of an emergency medical transport.**
- **The system of providing Emergency Medical Services in Fairfax County will remain caring and compassionate.**
- **The Department will continue to provide the highest quality care possible.**
- **Implementation of a charge for EMS transport services will never diminish the way care is provided by county EMS providers.**

## Fast Facts

- The Fire and Rescue Department responded to 91,373 incidents for fiscal year 2004, averaging 250 incidents daily, for all hazards and emergency medical calls.
- The Fire and Rescue Department responded to 62,420 EMS incidents in fiscal year 2004, and transported 40,949 patients.
- It is estimated that 70 percent or more of jurisdictions across the country charge for ambulance transport services.
- The Fire and Rescue Department provides 35 advanced life support fire engines, 22 advanced life support medical units, 18 ambulances, and has nearly 400 advanced life support providers for its residents and visitors on a 24/7 basis.
- The District of Columbia, Arlington County, and the City of Alexandria currently charge for EMS transport services.

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. When will Fairfax County implement EMS billing?

Program implementation is scheduled for April 1, 2005.

2. How is charging for emergency medical transport service authorized?

On May 24, 2004, the County Board of Supervisors approved the adoption of Section 4-26-1 of the Fairfax County Code that establishes a fee schedule for Emergency Medical Service Transports provided by vehicles operated or maintained by Fairfax County or permitted to Fairfax County. Additionally, Section 32.1-111.14 of the Code of Virginia authorizes counties to make reasonable charges for the use of emergency medical service vehicles.

3. What are the charges for emergency medical services?

Charges include: \$500 for Basic Life Support (BLS) transport; \$650 for Advanced Life Support, level 1, (ALS1) transport, (serious medical problems or traumatic injury); \$800 for Advanced Life Support, level 2 (ALS2) transport, (cardiac arrest); and \$12 per mile, from pick-up point to the hospital for ground transport.

4. If I don't have health insurance, and cannot pay my bill, what options do I have?

Patients transported who do not have health insurance will be sent a request for information that will include a financial hardship waiver form.

5. How does billing work?

Fairfax County has contracted with a company to handle the EMS transport billing. After patient care is provided, insurance information will be obtained routinely, most often at the hospital. Fairfax County will waive co-payments and deductibles for county residents. Residents may receive an initial statement from the billing company. For county residents who are uninsured, Fairfax County has adopted a compassionate billing policy.

6. What if my insurance company will not cover my ambulance transport bill?

The County's billing service will attempt to gain all information required to show the medical necessity of the transport. However, if the claim is ultimately rejected, the Department will consider the charge uncollectible for county residents.

7. Will Medicare pay for EMS transport services?

Medicare will pay 80 percent of the charge for medically necessary transports. Remaining co-payments or deductibles will be waived for Fairfax County residents.



8. I receive requests from county volunteer fire departments (VFDs) for donations. Does this program replace the need for volunteer funding?

No. Money collected goes directly into the county general fund. The VFDs do receive financial support from Fairfax County for some capital assets; however, much of VFDs capital and operating expenses are covered by donations received from the community.



9. If the co-payment for EMS transport is being waived, will there be any out-of-pocket expenses incurred?

There will be no additional charges for EMS transport for county residents who have health insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. Patients who reside outside the county will be billed for charges not covered by insurance.

10. If there is an ambulance call to a school, business, or workplace, what procedures will be followed?

Procedures and policies are the same regardless of the location of the emergency. County medical responders' responsibility is to take care of our patients. Billing for transport services will be handled routinely after patient needs are addressed.

11. How will my privacy be protected?

All Department members have been trained on patient privacy, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements and will strictly adhere to those standards.

12. Who will I call if I have a billing or insurance problem?

The billing company will have customer service representatives to address billing and insurance questions. If you are not satisfied, you may contact the Fire and Rescue Department Patient Advocate at 703-246-2266.

**For more information, questions, or to schedule a community presentation, please call 703-246-2266; TTY 711. This information will be provided in alternative formats, such as large print or Braille, upon request. Please allow ten days for processing.**