

Louisville Fire Protection District

Frequently Asked Questions About Billing

Why does the fire district have a revenue recovery program?

Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance policies include the cost of ambulance transport. As the need for additional emergency responders increases, local governments have sought ways to pay for these services without raising property taxes. Many other local governments in Colorado have found that billing Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance for ambulance transport service has resulted in a large amount of revenue being recovered to help fund Fire/EMS services. The availability of such revenues led the LFPD to join the more than 40 cities, counties, and towns in Colorado that currently have such a system.

How does this affect me?

If you have private insurance or are covered by Medicaid or Medicare, it will probably not affect you because you have already paid for the cost of ambulance transport through your policy or coverage. However, most importantly the LFPD board of directors is looking for ways to avoid future tax increase proposals. While this is always an option, the board is dedicated to minimizing the need for an additional general tax levy. Recovery fees are seen as a viable option.

Why does the district need this money?

The number of 911 calls being placed to Louisville Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has increased significantly in recent years. The increase in calls has challenged the ability of our emergency personnel to consistently deliver the needed services to residents and citizens.

How much money will be recovered?

Louisville Fire District estimates that about \$75k - \$80k will be recovered annually. This revenue will be used to fund EMS needs, including personnel and equipment.

What part of this \$75k will come out of the pockets of citizens?

Payments from individuals are expected to account for only 5% of total revenues recovered. The overwhelming percentage of the revenue will come from Medicaid, Medicare, and insurance company payments. In our community, nearly one-half of the revenue is expected to be recovered from Medicare alone.

HOW IT WORKS

How does the billing work?

The LFPD has contracted with a service to handle the EMS billing. The insurer, whether Medicaid, Medicare, or a private company, will receive the bill. Patients will not be billed until all insurance options are exhausted.

Will insurance generally pay all of my bill?

It is our experience that most insurance companies pay 80% of the charges for the service.

If insurance pays, what will I have to pay?

If your insurance company pays, you are responsible only for any co-pays or deductibles.

What methods of payment will you accept?

The billing company expects to accept cash, personal checks, money orders, and credit cards.

What if I do not have insurance and also choose not to subscribe?

If you are not a subscriber and do not have insurance, Medicaid or Medicare, a bill will be sent to you. If you are not able to pay in full, the billing agency will be glad to work with you to set up a payment plan. As long as regular payments are made, no additional collection efforts will be pursued.

ABILITY TO PAY

What if I am unable to pay?

Louisville EMS revenue recovery policy includes financial hardship provisions. If you can demonstrate financial hardship in accordance with the District's policy, a substantial reduction is available (up to 100% for those with a household income under \$20,000). The policy provides a credit to your bill as follows:

<u>Range of Annual Income</u>	<u>Potential Reduction</u>
\$0 - \$20,000	100%

The bill can be paid in installments on a payment plan. If at any time during the billing process you claim a financial hardship that prevents full payment of the bill, you will be sent a Financial Hardship Certification Form. You must complete this form, attach the required documentation and return it.

If I have a balance to be paid on my bill, will I be refused ambulance service?

Louisville Fire/Rescue will not deny ambulance service to those with delinquent accounts or anyone else. This program will not change the ambulance service provided to anyone in LFPD regardless of

insurance coverage or any other factor. Emergency responders will have no knowledge of who has paid and who has not paid.

If EMS comes to my house but I don't need transport, will I receive a bill?

No. However, there may be a small fee for incidents that require significant care and equipment (e.g. cardiac arrest).

INSURANCE INFORMATION

Will my health insurance premiums increase as a result of this billing?

Unfortunately, health insurance premiums continue to rise regardless of whether or not a community decides to bill for EMS transports. Such factors as prescription-drug coverage, litigation, technology improvements in the medical field, and depressed insurance company investment returns have resulted in escalating health insurance premium costs. However, ambulance transport costs represent less than 1% of health care expenditures. Many other local governments in Colorado have implemented a revenue recover program for ambulance transport fees, and they have reported no evidence that EMS billing increases health insurance premiums.

What type of information will I have to give when the ambulance arrives?

Persons using the Emergency Medical Service are asked to provide any insurance information you have at the time of service, whenever possible. Attending to the patient's medical needs will always be first priority.

What if I am not able to provide the insurance information at that time?

If our insurance information is not available at the time of service, the billing company will attempt to obtain the information at the hospital. If the information cannot be obtained, you may receive a letter asking you to provide the information. When the billing office receives the information, your insurance will be billed. You will not receive any further correspondence or bills until the insurance company has made a determination on your claim.

Will Louisville EMS file my insurance forms for me?

Yes, we will gladly file all insurance claims and forms.

RATES

What are billing rates for this EMS service?

Our charges will be \$620 for a standard Basic Life Support (BLS) call and \$1,170 for Advanced Life Support (ALS) for residents of the district. A charge of \$15 per mile, from the location of your call to the hospital, will also be part of each bill. You will not be charged for the distance the ambulance must travel from the fire station to get to you. While these rates may appear to be significant, they are consistent with most of the Front Range ambulance services.

Why is there a mileage charge?

A very large portion of the revenue that the LFPD anticipates collecting from this program will come from Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare requires mileage be included in determining the total amount covered for ambulance transports, and Medicaid calculates the allowable rate to be reimbursed based on mileage. The District needs to be uniform in its billing procedures and therefore, charges mileage on all bills.

What other localities in this area have EMS billing programs?

More than 40 cities, counties, and towns in Colorado currently bill for emergency ambulance transport to recover revenue. Nearby billing localities include Lafayette, Superior (Rocky Mountain Fire), Westminster, North Metro (Broomfield/North Glenn). Our research indicates that nearly 80% of Colorado residents live in localities that bill for EMS transport. Nationally, that percentage approaches 85%. Many other localities in Colorado are also considering this type of revenue recovery.

EFFECT ON THE VOLUNTEERS

What is the position of the volunteers on this issue?

Individual volunteers have varying opinions on cost recovery. However, most agree that having some additional staff is needed during low staffing periods. It is generally seen as a necessary program, too maintain a quality EMS program to our citizens. The Volunteer Fire Officers have all endorsed the need for additional staff, and the Volunteer Public Safety Advisory Board has endorsed the concept of the revenue recovery program.

How does this help the volunteers?

New funding made available through revenue recovery will be used to provide additional resources to volunteers, helping them to continue to provide the best possible service to the District's citizens. The primary goal of all LFPD emergency personnel is for the public to receive the best emergency service possible.

Is Louisville Fire Department phasing out the volunteer system in favor of a paid system?

Louisville will be dependent upon its outstanding volunteers for many years to come. Unlike many places, Louisville Fire Department continues to make every effort to maintain a vibrant and capable volunteer staff. Unfortunately, the same number of volunteers are having to answer significantly more calls for service, and the limited paid staff Louisville has on hand continues to be a challenge. Finding sufficient responders in the district during daytime hours has proved to be particularly challenging in these days of changing demographics and "two-working parent" families.

The LFPD continues to actively recruit and welcome volunteers. The Board of Directors has a long-standing commitment to the volunteer system and this year has set aside an operations budget for stipends to fund additional incentives for our volunteers in addition to existing volunteer incentives programs.

Have the other localities that implemented ambulance fees lost volunteers as a result?

In our discussions with other localities that have implemented this system, none reported losing a significant number of volunteers.

Will the ambulance fees provide all the support needed to help Fire/EMS meet its challenges?

No. It is our hope that the revenues recovered will pay for the EMS program for the next several years. However, Fire/EMS also has very significant operational and equipment expenses that are not wholly funded by this revenue recovery.

TIMETABLE

When will the ambulance fees take effect?

It is expected that the billing will begin by April 5, 2008.

Who can I call if I have more questions?

For more information about Fire and EMS services in Louisville Fire District, please call 303-666-6595. If you have a billing question, please call the district's billing agent @ 303-431-6181 or 877-877-9550 (toll free). The billing office will be open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. except on holidays.

MISCELLANEOUS

What percentage of calls come from people just passing through the District who do not live here?

We expect about 10 – 15% of EMS calls have been from non-district residents. Please note that non-residents are charged a higher rate than district residents.

How are you going to collect the money from non-district residents?

Payments will be collected from non-residents in the same way as payments are collected from residents.

How do you protect the privacy of my health information?

The LFPD has a federally required Health Insurance Privacy Protection Act (HIPPA) Compliance Program in place to protect your health information.

Is this the District's first user fee used in Louisville or the unincorporated areas of Boulder County we serve?

No, a number of City and County departments have user fees, including the schools, Parks and Recreation, Building Inspection, Planning, and Public Utilities.

Why does the LFPD have user fees?

User fees are a sound way to raise the money needed to operate programs without using general tax money and are considered fair because only the citizens who use the service pay for it. In this case, funding Fire/EMS needs through revenue recovery means that only the people who need ambulance transport pay for it, with the vast majority of these revenues collected from Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance companies.

LOUISVILLE AMBULANCE SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAM

What is the ambulance subscription program?

Louisville Fire Rescue also offers an ambulance subscription program to help reduce the cost of ambulance transports. For an annual fee all persons in a household can become a subscriber. If a subscriber has to be transported by ambulance, their insurance company will be billed as normal. However, any co-payment required under the insurance policy will be considered paid as outlined in the subscription guidelines.

The cost of a subscription can be found on our website located under the ambulance program section.