



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT EMS TRANSPORT BILLING PROGRAM

1. The system of providing Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Anne Arundel County is focused on delivering world-class patient care: regardless of anyone's ability to pay for such service.
2. No resident will ever suffer financial hardship as a result of an EMS transport.
3. Implementation of an EMS transport billing (fee for service) program will have no effect on the quality of care provided. The program will be transparent and a system of checks and balances will be established to ensure that all residents are treated professionally, courteously, and with compassion.
4. We will – respond quickly, act competently, be nice.

1. What is EMS transport billing (fee for service) and why did Anne Arundel County implement this program?

EMS transport billing (fee for service) is the process of obtaining financial reimbursement for the cost of providing medically necessary ambulance transportation. Medicaid, Medicare, and most other private insurance policies (health, auto, homeowner) already allow for reimbursement for this service. Anne Arundel County implemented this program to seek reimbursement of these funds that help supplement some of the operational expenses for providing Fire, Rescue, and EMS while giving some relief to the general fund and ultimately the taxpayer.

2. When did Anne Arundel County begin billing for EMS transport?

The program is tentatively planned to began April 1, 2009.

3. How is charging for EMS transport authorized?

On June 1, 2008, Anne Arundel County Council amended Anne Arundel County Code Article 12, Title 1, §12-1-105 to permit such action.

4. What are the charges for EMS transport?

The County will charge a fee of \$700.00 or \$750.00, per transport, depending on the type of call, along with mileage.

5. Doesn't an EMS billing system amount to "double taxation?" As a property owner, I am already paying taxes that fund emergency medical services through the fire department.

No. Charges for medical transport services results in revenues that should actually decrease the tax burden for Anne Arundel County residents. The fees are paid as part of insurance coverage for County residents and non-residents alike. In addition, those persons who do not pay County taxes will also be bearing their share of the costs of the services that are funded by the County. For County residents, the taxes paid will be considered as payment for that portion of the fee that is not covered by insurance. Those residing outside of the County will be billed for any balance due.

6. Why am I being billed for ambulance transport service? Isn't the service free?

Each year emergency call volume increases – last year reaching 40,000 transports and the cost of delivering critical emergency services approaches \$123 million annually including personnel, training, equipment and apparatus. In order to partially recoup costs and help ease the burden on taxpayers and property owners, we bill insurance carriers. The demand for, and cost associated with, providing this essential service will continue to rise as our population grows.



7. How does billing work?

Anne Arundel County contracts with an independent EMS transport billing company. The selected vendor is required to adhere to stringent rules concerning patient confidentiality, professionalism, and courtesy in the administration of the EMS transport billing program. For County residents, taxes paid will be counted as payment for any portion of the fee that is not covered by insurance. Those residing outside the County will be billed for balances due. The County will consider waivers for financial hardship to those unable to pay balances due.

8. How will insurance information be obtained?

Patient care and attending to a patient's needs are always the most important priorities in EMS. Fire department professionals do not seek patient insurance information at the time care is provided. After transport, the independent billing company works with the transported patient and the receiving hospital to obtain the necessary information. Transported patients may receive a request for insurance information and permission to bill the insurance carrier along with a copy of the proposed invoice. Upon receipt, the company will bill the insurance carrier. No further correspondence should be received until the insurance company has made a determination of payment.

9. Will I have to pay for the service at the time it is provided / rendered?



No. Patient information will be obtained by the independent billing agency after the call is completed. Recent changes in rules set by the Department of Health and Human Services enable governmental entities latitude in determining billing practices, accepting partial payment and waiving co-pays and deductibles. It also permits for the establishment of a "compassionate billing program" for those without insurance of any kind who cannot pay.

10. What is a "Compassionate Billing Program"?

A compassionate billing program accounts for the fact that there are individuals who are unable to pay for medical transport services due to financial hardship. Therefore, the County will grant waivers for payments to those persons who meet certain financial requirements. This applies to non-residents of the County. County residents will not be billed for any unpaid fees (after insurance) because County residents' payment of taxes is considered their contribution toward those unpaid fees. The threshold for granting a waiver of a bill under this program will be 250% of the federal health care poverty guidelines for the lower 48 states and the District of Columbia. A family of four earning \$65,500 a year or less would be eligible for this program. A family of two earning \$43,100 a year or less would also be eligible. A single person would qualify at \$31,900.

11. How is my privacy be protected?

Federal HIPAA laws are strictly followed. All Department members are trained in patient privacy matters as part of their EMS training.

12. I am a County resident and I do not have insurance of any kind. Will I receive a bill?

No person will ever be denied EMS transport regardless of their ability to pay. Federal law requires that an invoice be generated and a charge imposed. If there is no insurance coverage, then a County resident may receive an invoice, but taxes paid will be considered as payment of the charges to the County resident. The County will not collect any further sums from County residents. Non-County residents will receive invoices, and the County will attempt to collect the sums due. Non-County residents may apply for waivers based on financial hardship. The Controller of Anne Arundel County and the Fire Chief will have the authority to waive a bill if it is deemed to represent a financial hardship.



13. I am a County resident, but my insurance company will not pay for EMS transport. Will I be responsible for the bill?

Insured patients, who are residents of Anne Arundel County, are not responsible for any ambulance transport fee not paid by their insurance carrier or carriers.

14. If a resident of the County has reached an insurance limit for EMS transport for the year, and additional services are required, will the resident get a bill for these additional services, or can the fee be waived?

Historically, this has not been an issue based on various insurance carriers and most, if not all, policies do not place a limit on medically - necessary transports related to EMS service.

15. Can the billing company send uncollected debts to a collection agency?



No Anne Arundel County residents will ever have an unpaid transport bill sent to a collection agency.

16. Who do I call if I have a billing or insurance problem?

The EMS billing company will have customer service representatives to address billing and insurance questions through a toll-free 800 number and the internet. If you are not satisfied, you may contact the fire department Billing Manager at 410-222-8467. You can also email the Fire Department with questions / concerns at FDemsbilling@aacounty.org

17. What happens if I call 911 and do not need to be transported? Will I be billed?

No. A bill will only be generated if you are transported to a hospital. You will, however, be required to sign a refusal of care form releasing the medical providers and the County from any liability arising from your refusal to accept transport to the hospital.

18. If I call 911 for someone else, am I responsible for any bill resulting from an EMS transport, even if I am not the person transported?

No. Only the person who is transported by ambulance can be billed.

19. If an out-of-county ambulance responds into the County and provides EMS transport, what billing policy applies?

The County enters into mutual aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions. In those instances when an out-of-county ambulance responds into the County and transports a patient to the hospital, the billing policy of the out-of-county ambulance applies. Anne Arundel County cannot affect the policy of another jurisdiction.



EFFECT ON VOLUNTEERS

20. How does this program help volunteer fire fighters and fire companies in the County?

New funding made available through EMS transport billing will be placed in the General Fund. Monies from the General Fund are used to support volunteers by maintaining existing facilities, providing personal protective equipment and uniforms, fuel for apparatus and training. The County also contributes to the Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) providing volunteers with a small monthly stipend after 25 years of service. The Anne Arundel County Volunteer Firefighters Association has expressed its support of an EMS transport billing program and the County is developing a revenue sharing program with volunteer companies who staff their ambulances.



21. I have always contributed to my local volunteer fire company? Will they still need my donation?



Yes! Anne Arundel County Volunteer Fire Companies use donations to make capital purchases (fire apparatus), make improvements to existing facilities, and plan for long term financial growth. Your donations make it possible for volunteer fire companies to remain a vibrant part of our emergency services delivery system.

26. Will an EMS transport billing system result in a loss of volunteers in Anne Arundel County?

The County is blessed to have a dedicated cadre of well-trained and active volunteers and does not expect any decrease in volunteerism associated with an EMS transport billing system, despite a downward trend in volunteerism nationwide. Anne Arundel

County will always support a Fire/Rescue system that promotes volunteerism even as it continues to develop a delivery model that ensures continuity and consistency. One of the goals of the program is to promote volunteerism through revenue sharing.