

Fire Service Recovery Program Overview

The Williamsport Volunteer Fire & EMS has with much debate, deliberation, and reluctance, adopted a billing policy effective January 1, 2008. The policy is similar to all ambulance companies within the county as well as several other fire departments. The need for billing is simply a matter of economics. We do receive donations from the community via our annual mail out fund drive. For this, we are extremely grateful and hope our level of donations will continue. Every dollar of support is appreciated, however, we find that the percentage of contributors as well as the amount of money received has remained stagnant. Our demand for services continues to rise being directly attributed to an increase in the number of community developments and the added call volume that goes along with such development. We do receive additional funding from gaming receipts distributed equally to other Fire and Rescue Company's in Washington County. This funding stream continues to be challenged in the State of Maryland as jurisdictions continue to meet their financial obligations.

The billing program grew out of these financial realities. We would like to stress that no call will go unanswered for financial reasons. No person will be denied service based on past contributions. The firefighters that arrive at your emergency will most likely have no idea if you contribute to our fund drive. The billing program is administered by a few members and in no way can be used to influence our primary mission, which is, to protect life and property. The program is very simple. It is outlined below along with the rate structure. The rate structure is one agreed upon by several other departments within Washington County. This money is not guaranteed and is only a small percentage of our budget. Washington County, unlike other Maryland counties (Montgomery, Prince George, Howard, Frederick) does not have a fire tax. The county allocation to us has remained constant for ten years despite increased financial obligations. We have been very aggressive, and through hard work successful, at obtaining federal state and local grants as well.

What do we spend our money on? All our monies are spent on maintaining our current level of operations and response. The dollars spent annually thru all our revenue sources vary by categories such as fuel for the units, vehicle maintenance, station facility repairs, equipment replacement, and community service programs such as free smoke detectors.

Why we need a New Funding Source: Our station was built in 1979, and has been in constant operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year ever since that time. In January 2006, the Williamsport Volunteer Fire Company and Williamsport Volunteer Ambulance Service began a merger process to make all emergency service in Williamsport more effective, efficient and uniform by bringing all services into a single facility. By this merger, the combined organization has evolved to a need for renovation of our current facility. This will both accommodate the needs of our organization and the community that we serve. The renovations to our 29 year old facility will bring our station to a modernized facility that will best meet the needs of our volunteers staffing the station, increase office space for the leadership of the organization and continue to serve as a gathering place for the community in a time of natural or man made emergency.

Fire and EMS Units have a service life of any where for 10 to 25 years, depending on the level of service and usage. The newest ambulance was purchased in 2003, with the oldest being a 1995. Both units have a combined mileage of almost 200,000 miles. The oldest fire unit is 25 years old with the newest being 12 years old. We strive and take pride in our units but in the future replacements will be needed with an average cost of a pumper of \$ 450,000.00 and an ambulance costing approximately \$ 180,000.00. So to summarize, we need to find an additional funding source to support the replacement of critical response vehicle to maintain our service delivery level.

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We do provide all of our service with volunteers and two full time EMS personnel. Thousands of hours are spend responding to emergencies, training and community programs.

This program will be just one additional funding source to assist us in our financial needs to provide services to the Williamsport Community.

How the program will work:

Call for assistance is answered:

1. If the call resulted in a loss, which would be covered, by homeowners or vehicle insurance (house fire, auto accident, car fire, flooding, shed/garage fire, industrial accident etc.) our billing company will make a claim to the insurance agency. If this claim is denied, the billing company will send the owner a bill **only if this person has not contributed to the annual fund drive**. If they have contributed this year the matter is done. If the person not contributing does not pay the bill, a collection agency will be notified after second and third notices have been sent.
2. For those calls, which do not result in a loss that could be, assessed to an insurance agency (fire alarms, smell of smoke with nothing found, outside fires, etc.) **those contributing to the fund drive will not receive anything**. Those choosing not to contribute will be sent a bill. Those choosing not to contribute will be sent a bill. If payment is not received, second and third notices will be sent and then a collection agency will be notified.

Fee Structure:

Fire Suppression Rate 1: \$500	Car fires, small fires up to 2 hours
Fire Suppression Rate 2: \$1000	Structure fires up to 2 hours
Rescue Rate 1: \$300	MVC without using rescue tools
Rescue Rate 2: \$750	MVC involving extrication from the crash
Hazmat 1: \$300	Spills less than 10 gallons requiring applying absorbent
Hazmat 2: \$750	Spills over 10 gallons requiring applying absorbent
Service Call1: \$50	Flooding, etc. lasting less than 30 minutes
Service Call 2: \$250	Longer than 30 minutes but less than 2 hours
Automatic Fire Alarm 1: \$100	Cancelled prior to response
Automatic Fire Alarm 2: \$300	Arrived and investigate
Hourly Rate	Over 2 hours applies (\$150 - 250) depending on incident type and equipment used

Please contact the station with any questions 301-223-9500 Extension 11 and a representative will return your call.