

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
SUBJECT: EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)  
SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND FEE  
SCHEDULE  
STAFF PRESENTER: DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF MARK MCCORMICK  
AGENDA ACTION: NO ACTION REQUESTED

---

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study session is to update the Council on the progress of reviewing the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Subscription Program.

The Administrative Services Department reviewed possible revenue sources with Council in November. The EMS Subscription Program was included as a potential revenue source during the report. Council requested that the Fire Department and Administrative Services move forward and explore the possibility of the implementation of an EMS Subscription Program and report back at a future meeting.

The Fire Department and Administrative Services Department will present an update on their progress. Staff has attached a Frequently Asked Questions document for review and will be prepared to answer questions. Some of the questions were generated from the recent community outreach sessions.

This item is being presented for informational purposes and requires no action on the Council's part. The Council may ask questions of staff and discuss these matters.

Attachments:

Attachment "A" – EMS Subscription Program Frequently Asked Questions

# **ATTACHMENT “A”**

## **City of Santa Rosa Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Subscription Program (Proposed)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. What is the EMS Subscription Program?**

The EMS Subscription Program is an annual fee based voluntary membership program that covers the business and employees or resident and family members for any Fire Department medical response within City limits.

#### **2. Why does the Fire Department respond to medical emergencies?**

The Fire Department response to medical emergencies is part of a strategic County wide emergency medical response system. Fire engines are geographically located to arrive to emergency medical incidents within 6 minutes 90% of the time. The current average response time is 5 minutes. Medical transport ambulances are operated by Sonoma Life Support (SLS) as part of the Sonoma County EMS Franchise Area.

Ambulances are required to arrive within 11 minutes, 90% of the time, when Fire Department Units are on the scene. Working as partners the Fire Department has a contract with SLS to fund paramedics on fire engines. Firefighter paramedics arrive and provide initial medical care for the customer until the ambulance arrives to provide transport and continuing care to the hospital. This comprehensive approach to emergency care provides the best opportunity for optimal patient outcomes.

#### **3. Is the City proposing a charge for medical responses?**

The Fire Department makes up 25% of the City's General Fund budget. Approximately 65% of emergency calls for service are for medical emergencies. This voluntary fee program will provide cost recovery for a portion of the expenses funded by the City for emergency medical response. The proposed voluntary fee program is projected to recover approximately \$1.5 million of the current \$24 million Fire Operations budget.

#### **4. What does the Fire Department provide for EMS response?**

The Fire Department staffs fire engines, strategically located throughout the City, to respond to fire, EMS, hazardous materials, vehicle extrication and rescue emergencies within 6 minutes 90% of the time.

One Firefighter on each Fire Engine is trained to the Paramedic level and all Firefighters are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians. Fire Engines are first

responders and respond, through a cooperative private/public partnership with the County's ambulance franchise provider, to arrive and provide advanced life support care until the ambulance arrives.

**5. What is the yearly cost of the program?**

The cost of the program is \$48.00 (\$4.00 per month) annually for residents. Businesses pay \$48.00 annually for the first five (5) employees (Unit) and \$48.00 per Unit after that to a maximum of \$720.00 for 75 employees.

**6. Is there a discount for low income households?**

Yes. Households meeting the PG&E CARE program eligibility will have a reduced rate of \$36.00 for the voluntary subscription fee.

**7. Do other Cities have similar cost recovery programs?**

Yes. The City of Sonoma has operated a Fire Med subscription program for many years. The funds partially offset costs to the City of Sonoma for providing Fire and Paramedic services. 15 Cities were identified as having an EMS subscription program.

Subscription programs for cost recovery are also common in Southern California. The City of Corona is similar to the size of Santa Rosa. The City of Corona began a subscription program several years ago and currently recovers approximately \$1.8 million towards EMS service expenditures.

**8. Do I have to become a member?**

No, the program is strictly voluntary. Residents who do not subscribe will continue to receive the same quality EMS care that subscribers receive. While the membership is part of the utility billing process, there is no effect on utility service for not subscribing or non-payment of the EMS subscription program.

Residents and non-residents, who do not subscribe, will be billed for emergency medical responses at a fee of \$350.00 per call. This fee is less than the cost of the service based on the cost of the responding personnel, vehicle, supplies and support related to a response.

**9. How will I join to become a member?**

Residents who receive utilities from the City of Santa Rosa will receive information about the program in their utility bill. The program is voluntary and any resident may decline the membership on their utility bill. Residents who do not receive a monthly utility bill can sign up on-line or contact the Fire Department for an application form.

**10. Will everyone in my household be covered by the program?**

Residential Memberships cover all persons who reside at the residence. They are covered for responses anywhere within the Santa Rosa city limits. In addition, all

invited guests are covered while they are in the member's home or property attached to the home.

**11. Are businesses and employees covered by the program?**

Business memberships cover employees anywhere within the Santa Rosa city limits so long as the employees are acting within the scope of their employment.

**12. How are residents in assisted living facilities and apartments charged?**

Each 3 apartments will be treated as a "Unit" at a cost of \$48 per "Unit" per year. The per Unit cost would be \$16 per year.

**13. Are there any additional costs for EMS related services provided by the Fire Department?**

No. Any member with a valid subscription will not have to pay any out of pocket expenses toward payment of Fire Department EMS response costs.

**14. Does the program cover ambulance transportation cost?**

The Fire Department is prohibited from charging for advanced life support services. The County's franchise ambulance provider will bill for ambulance services as a result of their response to a medical emergency. The Fire Department will work with the ambulance provider to explore the idea of a joint billing for charges.

**15. If the ambulance arrives and the Fire Department does not provide medical care or is canceled will there still be a charge.**

No. There will only be a charge if the Fire Department provides care.

**16. Does Medicare cover the cost of EMS related services provided by the Fire Department?**

No, Medicare does not cover EMS related services provided by the Fire Department. Insurance coverage varies with each carrier.

## Survey of Agencies with an EMS Subscription Program

(February 2008)

Public Agency	Subscription Cost	Fire EMS Fee:	Payment Schedule	% of Households Subscribed	% of Businesses Subscribed	Revenue	Start Year	Ambulance Covered?	Low Income?
City of Anaheim	\$36	\$300	\$3/month or 48/yr Util.Bill	61%	50%	\$1, 710, 000	1985	No	Yes
City of Buena Park	\$36	\$125	\$3/month or \$36/yr	Unknown	Unknown	*	*	*	*
City of Burbank	\$48	Transport Rate	\$4/month or \$48/yr	Unknown	Unknown	*	*	*	*
City of Corona	\$48	\$350	\$4/month or \$48/yr Util.Bill.	Unknown	Unknown	\$1, 200, 000	2003	No	Yes
City of Davis	\$53	Transport Rate	\$4.45/month or \$53.40 year Util. Bill	Unknown	Unknown	*	*	*	*
City of Fullerton	\$42	\$200	\$3.50/month or \$42/yr Util. Bill	>37%	189 Businesses	\$1, 386, 000	1983	No	No
City of Downey	\$43	\$700	\$3.60/month or \$43/yr Util. Bill	5.50%	Residential Only	\$250, 000	1986	Yes	No
City of Huntington Beach	\$60	\$225	\$5/month or \$60/yr Muni. Svcs. Bill	37%	2 Businesses	\$1, 447, 560	1990	Yes	Yes
City of La Habra	\$36	\$172	\$3/month or \$36/yr	Unknown	Unknown	*	*	*	*
City of Newport Beach	\$48	\$225	\$4/month or \$48/yr Muni. Svcs. Bill	15%	200 Businesses	\$300, 464	1993	Yes	No
City of Orange	\$48	\$225	\$4/month or \$48/yr Util. Bill	40%	Residential Only	\$590, 000	1980's	Yes	No
City of Santa Ana	\$41	\$130	\$6.75/bi-monthly or \$41/yr Util. Bill	18%	Residential Only	\$159, 880	1982	Yes	No
City of San Clemente	\$35	\$282	\$3/month or \$36/yr	Unknown	Unknown	*	*	*	*
City of Sonoma	\$48	\$300	\$4/month or \$48/yr	26%	Mailables sent to households	\$56, 350	1991	Yes	No
City of Westminster	\$42	\$282	\$3.50/month or \$42/yr	Unknown	Unknown	*	*	*	*

Private Agencies									
REACH Air Ambulance	\$40	Transport Rate	\$3.30/month or \$40/yr	~8,500 Subscribers	*	Unknown	*	*	*
CalStar Air Ambulance	\$40	Transport Rate	\$3.30/month or \$40/yr	Unknown	*	Unknown	*	*	*
* Information not available.									