

## **Why Do I Receive A Bill For Ambulance Services and Why Is It So Expensive?**

You will receive a bill from American Medical Response (AMR) for a patient transport completed by an ambulance from the Riverside Fire Authority. This is due to our ambulance service contract with AMR. It is important to note that American Medical Response (AMR) is a privately owned business that does not receive tax dollars and relies solely upon user fees (ambulance billing) to stay in business. AMR is the contracted ambulance service provider for the area served by the Riverside Fire Authority so we do recommend that you contact them directly for a complete explanation of ambulance charges.

### Why do I receive a bill from AMR for ambulance service provided by Riverside Fire Authority?

Washington State law provides privately owned ambulance companies, like AMR, the opportunity to serve communities as the primary ambulance transport service through a competitive bid process. As the successful bidder for the contract, AMR, or a comparable partner ambulance service, is required to answer every 9-1-1 call for EMS in the Riverside Fire Authority area. This is a very challenging requirement since it is not unusual to have 3 or 4 EMS calls occurring at the same time in our area. Since 2003, AMR has contracted with the Centralia Fire Department and Lewis County Fire District #12 (now the Riverside Fire Authority) to be the “comparable partner ambulance service” that responds when AMR units are not immediately available, thus ensuring that our residents have reliable and effective ambulance services. The contract requires that AMR pay the Riverside Fire Authority over \$145,000.00 annually which offsets firefighter paramedic wages that would otherwise come from tax dollars. Under the contract, AMR is allowed to charge their usual and customary fees when the Riverside Fire Authority transports a patient in an effort to recover some of the funds they pay to the Riverside Fire Authority. In the end, AMR is able to meet their contract requirement to provide reliable services, the Riverside Fire Authority receives private funds from AMR to help pay personnel costs instead of relying solely upon tax dollars and the citizens receive quick, reliable and professional emergency medical service.

### Why are ambulance bills so expensive?

Ambulance services, like other health care services, have high operating expenses because of liability issues, very expensive equipment and high labor costs because employees must be continuously available to provide immediate service whether they have patients to care for or not (standby costs). Also, collection rates for ambulance services is quite low compared to what is actually billed. Unlike most businesses that collect exactly what is charged, ambulance services typically collect about 50 cents on the dollar billed. Consequently the charges go up. Patients that can pay are paying for themselves and the patients that can't or won't pay but no one in need is refused service regardless of ability to pay.