Memo

TO: Christiansburg Town Council

FROM: Becky Wilburn, Director of Public Relations

DATE: January 11, 2013

RE: EMS Revenue Recovery - Recap of Community Outreach Efforts

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Please accept the following as a recap of some of the community outreach efforts made by the public relations office in an effort to inform its citizenry regarding the Town's interest in pursuing an EMS Revenue Recovery program. Attached to this memo are some of the publications and press generated during the campaign:

- April 2012

-Christiansburg Town Council held a work session to be briefed on the status of the study and Council members were provided talking points and information to share with their constituents

- May 2012

-Information regarding the EMS Revenue Recovery study was sent out in the utility bill via an 8.5x11 duplex insert to approximately 9,400 water and sewer customers

-Press release about the study was sent out to all print and broadcast outlets, as well as posted on the Town's website. The press release generated coverage in the Roanoke Times and Christiansburg News Messenger, as well as news stories on WSLS Channel 10 and WDBJ 7

-Senior Care Fair Booth – EMS Revenue Recovery brochures were handed out to attendees

- June 2012

– Community Conversation at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center – this event was publicized on Facebook and in the Roanoke Times' 'The Burgs,' the Christiansburg News Messenger, and WSLS Channel 10. Flyers advertising the event were posted on the bulletin board at Wade's Supermarket and the employee rooms at Walmart, Food Lion and Kroger. Roanoke Times reporter Mike Gangloff and WSLS reporter Ken Heineck were in attendance. This event was also videotaped and posted on the Town's website. No community members attended.

- July 2012

- Depot Days Booth – EMS Revenue Recovery brochures were handed out to festival goers.

- July 2012

-Upcoming Community Conversation about EMS Revenue Recovery was advertised on Facebook, Town website, and a flyer advertising this event was included in the July utility bill (8.5x11 simplex), which was delivered to approximately 9,400 water and sewer customers.

-Community Conversation about EMS Revenue Recovery was held at the Christiansburg Recreation Center. The majority of the 12 people in attendance were in support of the program. Two attendees did show reservation, with one person desiring a subscription service while the other person was a County resident who desired to see the Town raise taxes instead.

- August 2012

-Presentation to the Christiansburg-Blacksburg Rotary Club about EMS Revenue Recovery by Rescue Squad Captain Joe Coyle and Director of Public Relations Becky Wilburn (at their request)

- September 2012

-Rescue Squad Captain Joe Coyle gave presentation on Revenue Recovery at the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors Meeting

- January 2013

-Notice in water and sewer utility bill regarding a public hearing on January 15, 2013 at the Christiansburg Town Council meeting regarding the possibility of the Town implementing a fee for ambulance transport service. The public hearing was also publicized on the Town's website, Facebook and Twitter pages.

Information also available via:

- Revenue Recovery webpage – www.christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery

- Brochures at Town Hall, Recreation Center, Aquatic Center

Revenue Recovery Has Hit

Rumor Has It...

You may be hearing a number of things regarding information about EMS revenue recovery programs. Read on to learn the truth behind common rumors.

I heard EMS revenue recovery will make my insurance go up, is that true?

There is no evidence insurance premiums go up because of EMS revenue recovery programs.

Does this mean the Rescue Squad no longer needs my donations?

No, the Rescue Squad depends on donations to help maintain their high standards of service.

I heard that if I can't pay, I won't receive emergency service.

No one will ever be denied emergency care based on their ability to pay.

But if I call 911, I will receive a bill, right?

This isn't true. A patient will only be billed if they are transported in an ambulance. In an emergency, call 911 without hesitation!

I heard that an EMS revenue recovery program would do away with Rescue Squad volunteers.

Volunteers play a vital role in Christiansburg and that would not change with an EMS revenue recovery program. However, due to rising area needs, the Town of Christiansburg anticipates needing to supplement volunteer efforts with career staff.

Are you going to send me to collections if I can't pay?

If the Town implements an EMS revenue recovery program, it will utilize "compassionate billing" practices, which are intended to minimize out-of-pocket expenses for those without the means to pay.

Heard a rumor? Get answers with us! Call the Public Relations Office at (540) 382-6128 x148 or email us at info@christiansburg.org to get the full scoop. Also visit www.christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery for more information.

Initial Press Release

Town of Christiansburg, Virginia 24073
100 East Main Street ~ Telephone 540-382-6128 ~ Fax 540-382-7338

*****FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE*****

Christiansburg Town Council Studying Emergency Medical Services Revenue Recovery Program
Date: 04/11/2012

(Christiansburg, Virginia) –

The Christiansburg Town Council is currently studying the possibility of an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Revenue Recovery program.

EMS revenue recovery programs obtain reimbursement for emergency medical transport costs. Under an EMS revenue recovery program, people who receive emergency transport would later be billed for those services. If a patient is not transported, there will be no fee for service.

It is important to note that under an EMS Revenue Recovery program, **no one would ever be denied EMS treatment or transport based on their ability to pay.**

Medicaid, Medicare and most other insurance policies already cover emergency transport services.

More than 100 EMS providers across Virginia currently utilize similar EMS revenue recovery programs to help meet their community needs.

The Town of Christiansburg is considering implementing an EMS Revenue Recovery program because local area needs have outpaced the ability of volunteer rescuers to respond to all of the calls in our community. Volunteers would still play a vital role in providing service to area residents, but the Town of Christiansburg is anticipating the need to supplement their efforts with career staff. Additionally, the overall cost of providing high quality emergency medical services continues to increase. Maintaining excellent service levels is a top priority for the Town and billing is an effective alternative to placing an additional tax burden on its citizens.

Town Council is not expected to make a decision on the matter for a few months. More information will be available in the coming months via utility bill inserts, community meetings and website updates. Visit www.christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery for more information.

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Contact:

Becky Wilburn
Public Relations Officer
Town of Christiansburg
bwilburn@christiansburg.org
(540) 382-6128 x148 (o)
(540) 505-9173 (c)

Revenue Recovery Website

Christiansburg Virginia

progressive small town living at its best

EMS Revenue Recovery

**** Watch the video presentations below to learn more about Revenue Recovery.****

The Town of Christiansburg is currently studying the possibility of an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Revenue Recovery program.

An EMS Revenue Recovery program obtains reimbursement for emergency medical (ambulance) transport costs. Medicaid, Medicare and most other insurance policies already cover this service. An EMS revenue recovery program recovers funds that can be reinvested into emergency services provided by the Town.

The Christiansburg Rescue Squad responds to between 3,400-4,000 calls for service annually; sometimes trying to answer three or four calls at one time. Local area needs have simply outpaced the ability of volunteer rescuers to respond to all of the calls in our community.

The Town greatly appreciates and respects the service of our rescue squad volunteers. These men and women would still play a vital role in providing coverage to area residents under a revenue recovery program. If approved, the Town anticipates using a revenue recovery program to supplement these volunteer efforts with career staff to help answer calls during the day.

Additionally, providing high quality emergency service levels is a top priority for the Town and billing is an effective means of obtaining necessary funds without placing an additional tax burden on our citizens.

If the Town implements an EMS revenue recovery program, it will utilize "compassionate billing" practices, which are intended to minimize out-of-pocket expenses for those without the means to pay.

Most importantly, no one would ever be denied EMS treatment or transport based on their ability to pay. During an emergency, we want you to call 911 without hesitation.

More than 100 other EMS providers across Virginia currently utilize similar EMS revenue recovery programs to help meet their community needs. Within our region, these providers include Floyd, Giles, and Roanoke Counties, the cities of Roanoke and Salem, and REMSI and Carilion Clinic Patient Transportation, which serve Pulaski County and the city of Radford, respectively.

Easy to Print Information Guide

EMS Revenue Recovery Presentation - Montgomery Co. Board of Supervisors - September 10, 2012

Video

Revenue recovery website page 2

EMS Revenue Recovery Community Conversation - June 7, 2012

Video

Frequently Asked Questions

How will EMS Revenue Recovery affect me?

If the Town of Christiansburg implements an EMS Revenue Recovery program, you will only be affected if you require emergency transport (ambulance) service. Under this program, if you are transported to a hospital, you will receive a bill for transport services that will be treated similar to an insurance co-pay. The only difference is that you and/or your insurance will pay the fee after treatment.

Are there nearby localities that use revenue recovery?

More than 100 EMS providers across Virginia currently utilize similar EMS Revenue Recovery programs. Withing our region, these providers include Floyd, Giles and Roanoke counties, the cities of Roanoke and Salem, and REMSI and Carilion Clinic Patient Transportation, which serve Pulaski County and the city of Radford, respectively.

Does my insurance cover these costs?

Most insurance companies, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover the majority, if not all, costs of emergency transport services.

What is "compassionate billing"?

Compassionate billing is intended to minimize out-of-pocket expenses for those without the means to pay. Under this type of billing program, if you have difficulty paying your transport bill, you'll be able to contact us to discuss your options.

If I call 911, will I recieve a bill?

No. You will only be billed if you are transported to a hospital. In an emergency, call 911 without hesitation!

If I don't have insurance or can't pay my bill, will I be refuse service?

No one will ever be refused emergency medical care based on their ability to pay. Our top priority is the patient's health.

If I have to be transported to the hospital, will I have to pay before treatment?

No. Your health is always top priority. Think of an EMS revenue recovery program as any other medical bill that is often covered predominately by your private insurance/Medicaid/Medicare. The only difference is that you and/or your insurance pay the fee after treatment.

Are you going to send me to collections if I can't pay?

No. If the Town implements an EMS Revenue Recovery program, it will utilize "compassionate billing" practices, which are intended to minimize out-of-pocket expenses for those without the means to pay.

Will my insurance go up?

Revenue recovery programs have been in place across Virginia for well over a decade. There has been no evidence that insurance premiums rise because of the implementation of an EMS revenue recovery program.

Does the Rescue Squad still need my donations?

Yes! The Rescue Squad depends on donations to maintain their high standards of service.

Will the Rescue Squad still have volunteers?

Yes. Volunteers play a vital role in Christiansburg and that would not change with an EMS Revenue Recovery program. However, due to rising area needs, the Town of Christiansburg anticipates needing to supplement volunteer efforts with career advanced life support responders.

Community Conversation Flyer- May 2012

The Town of Christiansburg invites you to a

Community Conversation

What: The Town of Christiansburg is studying the possibility of an EMS Revenue Recovery program:

EMS Revenue Recovery obtains reimbursement for emergency transport (ambulance) costs. Most insurance policies already cover this service. Recovered funds can be reinvested into emergency services provided by the Town.

Where: Multi-Purpose Room
Christiansburg Aquatic Center
595 North Franklin Street, Christiansburg

When: Thursday, June 7, 2012
7:00 p.m.

Why: Learn more about EMS Revenue Recovery:

Bring your questions and find out how EMS Revenue Recovery would work, what it would mean for you and why the Town is considering this program.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact: (540) 382-6128 x148 / info@christiansburg.org or visit our website: www.christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery.

Information Brochure

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Revenue Recovery Program

The Town of Christiansburg is currently studying the possibility of an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Revenue Recovery program. Read on to learn more about EMS revenue recovery and what it will mean for you if the program is adopted.

What is EMS Revenue Recovery?

An EMS Revenue Recovery program obtains reimbursement for emergency medical (ambulance) transport costs. Medicaid, Medicare and most other insurance policies provide coverage for this service. An EMS revenue recovery program recovers funds that can be reinvested into emergency services provided by the Town.

Why is Christiansburg considering this?

The Christiansburg Rescue Squad responds to 3,400-4,000 calls for service annually; sometimes trying to answer three or four calls at one time. Local area needs have simply outpaced the ability of volunteer rescuers to respond to all of the calls in our community. The Town greatly appreciates and respects the service of our rescue squad volunteers and these men and women would still play a vital role in providing coverage to area residents under a revenue recovery program. If the program is approved, the Town also plans to supplement volunteer efforts to answer calls during the day with career advanced life support responders. Additionally, the overall cost of providing high quality emergency medical services continues to increase. Maintaining excellent service levels is a top priority for the Town and billing is an effective method of obtaining necessary funds without placing an additional tax burden on our citizens.

More than 100 other EMS providers across Virginia currently utilize similar EMS revenue recovery programs to help meet their community needs.

If approved, what would an EMS Revenue Recovery program mean for me?

With an EMS Revenue Recovery program, those requiring emergency care and transport would later be billed for those services. Most insurance companies, including Medicaid and Medicare, provide coverage for emergency transport as part of their standard policy.

You or your insurance company will receive a bill only if you are taken to the hospital. If you call for emergency services, but are not transported, you will not be billed.

If the Town implements an EMS revenue recovery program, it will utilize "compassionate billing" practices, which are intended to minimize out-of-pocket expenses for those without the means to pay.

Most importantly, no one would ever be denied EMS treatment or transport based on their ability to pay. During an emergency, we want you to call 911 without hesitation.

Please Remember:

- Medicaid, Medicare and most other insurance policies provide coverage for EMS transport as part of their standard policy.
- If the program is approved, the Town will use compassionate billing
- No one will ever be denied EMS treatment or service based on their ability to pay.
- If you are not taken to the hospital, you will not receive a bill.
- Revenue recovery is a user-based fee. If you don't require EMS transport services, you don't pay.

The Town is still in the exploration phase regarding EMS revenue recovery. If approved, implementation of this program would occur over a length of time.

If you are a member of a civic organization or HOA and would like the Town to speak to your group about EMS revenue recovery, please contact Becky Wilburn at bwilburn@christiansburg.org or call (540) 382-6128 x148.

More information will be available in coming weeks and months. Please watch future utility bills and the newspaper for more information, or check our website for updates at: www.christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery

Information Brochure for Ambulance Transports

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Revenue Recovery Program

There is no fee for your transport today.

However, please be aware that the Town of Christiansburg is currently studying the possibility of implementing an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Revenue Recovery program.

Continue reading to learn more about this program and, if approved, what it will mean for you.

What is EMS Revenue Recovery?

An EMS Revenue Recovery program obtains reimbursement for emergency medical (ambulance) transport costs. Medicaid, Medicare and most other insurance policies already provide coverage for this service. An EMS revenue recovery program recovers funds that can be reinvested into emergency services provided by the Town.

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More than 100 other EMS providers across Virginia currently utilize similar EMS revenue recovery programs to help meet their community needs.

If approved, what would an EMS Revenue Recovery program mean for me?

Under an EMS Revenue Recovery program, a person transported via ambulance would later be billed for those services. Most insurance companies, including Medicaid and Medicare, provide coverage for emergency transport as part of their standard policy.

You or your insurance company will receive a bill only if you are taken to the hospital. If you call for emergency services, but are not transported, you will not be billed.

If the Town implements an EMS Revenue Recovery program, it will utilize "compassionate billing" practices, which are intended to minimize out-of-pocket expenses for those without the means to pay.

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If you have additional questions about revenue recovery, please contact Becky Wilburn at (540) 382-6128 x148 or bwilburn@christiansburg.org.

Utility Bill Insert - July 2012

Community Conversation- EMS Revenue Recovery

Have you heard that the Town of Christiansburg is currently studying the possibility of an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Revenue Recovery program? Attend our Community Conversation to learn more about EMS Revenue Recovery and what it may mean for you.

What is EMS Revenue Recovery?

An EMS Revenue Recovery program obtains reimbursement for emergency medical (ambulance) transport costs. Medicaid, Medicare and most other insurance policies provide coverage for this service. EMS revenue recovery programs recover funds that can be reinvested into emergency services provided by the Town.

Where can I learn more?

The Town is holding a Community Conversation at the Christiansburg Recreation Center. Bring your questions about EMS Revenue Recovery and learn why the Town is studying this program.

Where: Christiansburg Recreation Center
Senior Activities Room
(1600 North Franklin Street, Christiansburg)

When: July 31, 2012 at 10 a.m.

Light refreshments will be provided.

If you plan on attending, please contact Becky Wilburn: (540) 382-6128 x148/ bwilburn@christiansburg.org

If your civic organization or HOA would like the Town to speak to your group about EMS revenue recovery, please contact Becky Wilburn: (540) 382-6128 x148 / bwilburn@christiansburg.org

If you have questions or would like more information, please call (540) 382-6128 x148 or e-mail: info@christiansburg.org. Be sure to check our website for updates at: www.christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery

List of Facebook Posts for EMS Revenue Recovery:

Town of Christiansburg, VA
May 2, 2012

Christiansburg is studying the possibility of implementing a revenue recovery program for ambulance transport. If you receive a utility bill, be sure to check out the insert in this month's bill. You can also find out more here: www.christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery
1Like · Share
304 people saw this post

Town of Christiansburg, VA
May 26, 2012

Learn more about the possibility of an EMS Revenue Recovery program at our Community Conversation, June 7th. More info: http://ow.ly/b3pYS

Christiansburg, VA - Official Website
ow.ly
Find out what the possibility of an EMS Revenue Recovery program means for you.

Town of Christiansburg, VA
May 31, 2012

Have you gotten your invitation? You're invited to a Community Conversation about the possibility of an EMS Revenue Recovery program. Find out more: http://ow.ly/b3qcO

Christiansburg, VA - Official Website
ow.ly
Ask questions, get answers, find out about EMS Revenue Recovery.

Town of Christiansburg, VA
June 5, 2012

Make plans to come to the Community Conversation about EMS Revenue Recovery on Thursday, June 7 at 7 p.m. at the Aquatic Center. Learn why the Town is studying the possibility of this program and more! More info: http://ow.ly/blw4z

Christiansburg, VA - Official Website
ow.ly
Learn why the Town is studying EMS Revenue Recovery.
1Like · Share

Town of Christiansburg, VA
June 7, 2012

Don't forget about the Community Conversation TONIGHT at 7 p.m. in the multi-purpose room at the Aquatic Center! Bring your questions about EMS Revenue Recovery and learn why the Town is studying the possibility of this program. More info:http://ow.ly/b3r8M

Christiansburg, VA - Official Website
ow.ly
Find out more about EMS Revenue Recovery.

Town of Christiansburg, VA
June 20, 2012

In case you missed it, the EMS Revenue Recovery Community Conversation is online! To watch the video and learn more about EMS Revenue Recovery, please visit: http://ow.ly/bEFh7

Christiansburg, VA - Official Website - EMS Revenue Recovery
ow.ly
Learn about Revenue Recovery and why the Town is considering the program.
1Like Share

Town of Christiansburg, VA shared a link.
July 30, 2012

Make plans to attend the Community Conversation about EMS Revenue Recovery TOMORROW at the Christiansburg Recreation Center. More info:

Christiansburg, VA - Official Website
www.christiansburg.org
The Community Conversation starts at 10 a.m. at the Christiansburg Recreation Center.
Like · Share
Promote
382 people saw this post

Town of Christiansburg, VA shared a link.
January 11, 2013

A public hearing will be held to allow comments from the community regarding the possibility of Christiansburg implementing a fee for ambulance transport service.

The hearing will be held January 15, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. in Town Council Chambers, 100 E. Main St.

More info:
Christiansburg, VA - Official Website - EMS Revenue Recovery
www.christiansburg.org
EMS Revenue Recovery
Like · Share
Promote
116 people saw this post

.....Advertisement.....

Christiansburg considering ambulance fee

Posted April 30, 2012

CHRISTIANSBURG – Rides to the hospital may no longer be free for some Montgomery County residents if discussion of new ambulance charges becomes reality.

Christiansburg officials are rolling out an information campaign beginning Tuesday to test the waters for the concept, which has already been implemented in numerous localities including Roanoke, Roanoke County and Salem.

Christiansburg spokeswoman Becky Wilburn said Monday that the town hopes to inform residents of the need for charging for emergency transports and care, explain how it would work, and see how much support there is for the idea. Presently, volunteer rescue squads in Montgomery County do not charge for service, though private ambulance services do.

Actually instituting new fees can't happen without Town Council's approval, and there is no plan for a vote soon, Wilburn said.

"We're still many months out from council taking action," she said.

Money raised from the Emergency Medical Services Revenue Recovery Plan, as the still-developing proposal is being called, would let Christiansburg hire rescue staff to help cover day shifts. Right now, the town has one paid rescuer, Capt. Joe Coyle, leading an otherwise all-volunteer staff of about 60 people.

Coyle said Monday that volunteers will still be crucial to maintaining rescue services, but having additional paid staffers will make for more consistent service. In addition, money from fees would help cover the always-rising cost of specialized equipment, Coyle said.

Christiansburg presently puts about $500,000 of town money toward emergency medical response services each year. About $100,000 more is contributed by Montgomery County, as the squad serves a section of the county outside town limits as well.

Christiansburg's squad answers 3,400 to 4,000 calls per year, Coyle and Wilburn said. Nearly half have been outside town recently.

Floyd County Administrator Dan Campbell said the fee mechanism that county officials put in place there about a decade ago works smoothly and pays nearly all the costs of six full-time-equivalent paid rescue positions.

"At this point, the citizens, the vast majority, see the advantages" of the fee system, Campbell said.

Christiansburg has issued a request for proposals to companies that would administer billing for the new system. Proposals are due by May 18, and it would likely be a couple months later that Town Council would consider whether to adopt a fee structure.

Fees have not been determined, but would likely range from several hundred dollars for transport to the hospital to a $500 or $600 charge for life support, Coyle and Wilburn said.

The town would refuse service to no one and have a "compassionate billing" mechanism to waive bills for the needy, they said.

A chief concern with instituting fees is to not discourage those who need help from calling for it, Coyle said. A volunteer in Roanoke County when it adopted fees in 2000, Coyle said the county saw no decrease in demand for service.

Still, throughout the process ahead, the focus will be on "outcomes before incomes – good patient outcomes," Coyle said.

By Mike Gangloff
The Roanoke Times | 381-1699

1. 60 volunteers 24 hours in a day calls can be covered. 30 volunteers and 2300 calls got covered. What is the cost to tax payers for 30 more volunteers and calls that can't be covered. Use private services for non emergency calls freeing up volunters for emergency calls. More calls will become ALS calls witch will increase the feas charged. Maybe new leadership could solve the problems of calls being answered. If town is going to hire people they should be able to do both fire and EMS.

   Comment by David — May 1, 2012 @ 3:13 pm

2. if they would stop buying so many new trucks and stop buying one to just ride around in, they would save enough money that they would not have to charge. could not tell you how many times I have seen an Ambulance setting at a restaurant with motor RUNNING and the crew is inside eating. with the cost of fuel as high as it is this needs to stop. but no, instead of saving money they just ask for more. sounds like Washington to me.

   Comment by bruce — May 2, 2012 @ 9:08 am

RSS feed for comments on this post.

Leave a comment

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

Comment

You may use these HTML tags and attributes: `<a href="" title=""> <abbr title-""> <acronym title=""> <b> <blockquote cite-""> <cite> <code> <del datetime=""> <em> <i> <q cite=""> <strike> <strong>`

Post Comment

Christiansburg mulls ambulance fees

Money raised from the still-developing proposal would let the town hire rescue staff to help cover day shifts.

By Mike Gangloff
mike.gangloff@roanoke.com
381-1669

CHRISTIANSBURG — Rides to the hospital may no longer be free for some Montgomery County residents if discussion of new ambulance charges becomes reality.

Christiansburg officials are rolling out an information campaign beginning today to test the waters for the concept, which already has been implemented in numerous localities including Roanoke, Roanoke County and Salem.

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Still, throughout the process ahead, the focus will be on "outcomes before incomes — good patient outcomes," Coyle said.

MAY 1, 2012

wdbj7.com

Christiansburg considering plan that would charge people for ambulance rides

More than 100 EMS providers around the state already charge users a fee.

Orlando Salinas

WDBJ7 Blacksburg Reporter

4:45 PM EDT, May 3, 2012

CHRISTIANSBURG, Va.

Many of the people who put in time at your local rescue squad are probably volunteers. They might work in shifts or they scramble from their homes to the sight of an emergency.

advertisement

The town of Christiansburg is considering a new user fee to make sure the rescue squad stays up to date and able to work.

Running a rescue squad takes money - a lot of it. And town officials in Christiansbug say a "revenue recovery program" -- if passed -- could bring in cash for the future.

Everytime those huge bay doors open at the Christiansburg Rescue squad, volunteers scramble to save lives.

But saving lives costs money, so town officials are considering a plan that would have users paying every time they're transported to the hospital.

"An average ambulance runs $189,000, a cardiac machine another $22,000 and those expenses are going up every year so it becomes really important to have a dedicated revenue stream," Captain Joe Coyle of the Christiansburg Rescue Squad said.

More than 100 EMS providers around the state already bill users a fee. But the Christiansburg Rescue Squad has put off charging anyone, and says it's only a proposal for now, but it's a serious one.

"Revenue recovery is about meeting the community needs, and call volume keeps going up. The cost of delivering community services keeps going up and revenue recovery is a way to ensure we're able to provide the level of service for our community.," Christiansburg public relations officer Becky Wilburn said.

The annual budget just to save lives at this rescue squad runs nearly $700,000. The captain says whether people

have money to pay for an ambulance ride is not the point

"You will never be denied care because you cant pay, that is not the thrust of this program," Wilburn said.

The Christiansburg Rescue Squad runs close to 4,000 calls a year. That makes them number one in the county with a staff of about 60 volunteers.

The town may roll out this proposal around June. That's when the town will start holding public meetings to talk about this revenue recovery program.

Copyright © 2013, WDBJ7-TV

Published: May 04, 2012

Christiansburg looks at charging for ambulance rides

By Ken Heineck

More than 100 EMS providers already charge to take people to the hospital.

The same fees may become a reality in Christiansburg.

The town's rescue squad is considering a revenue recovery program aimed at recouping money when you ride in an ambulance.

The town and Montgomery County provide around $700,000 a year for operating costs.

But officials say getting money back from patients is a way to keep the best crews on call.

"Right now when we run an ambulance call, there's already dedicated funding for that through most major

insurance policies, medicare, and medicaid and we are simply leaving that on the table in their pockets when we really need to be recouping that," said Joe Coyle, Captain of the Christiansburg Rescue Squad.

The town plans to only soft bill customers.

This means if you cannot pay, a plan will be worked out, and it will not hurt your credit.

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Slow selling EMS fees

Christiansburg wants to build support before it starts charging for ambulance rides.

In government, as in business, success often hinges on how one sells something. Raise prices while offering little discernible benefit and people get upset. Take your time, explain how new fees will help everyone and suddenly it is something consumers or taxpayers can get behind.

Christiansburg is wisely pursuing the latter course as it considers usage fees for ambulance services.

The town announced it is studying the idea. It suggests a ride to the hospital in an emergency would cost a few hundred dollars, more if life support is needed. The bill would arrive afterward, and no one would be denied service based on inability to pay.

That sounds like a lot of money, especially given that many people who call for emergency medical services are seniors on fixed incomes. The real cost, however, would be less for many people because some insurance plans cover ambulance service. Moreover, the town says it could charge a reduced or no fee for people who genuinely cannot afford it.

Other communities in Southwest Virginia have imposed similar fees, including Roanoke and Salem as well as Floyd, Giles and Roanoke counties.

In Christiansburg — this is the discernible benefits part of the pitch — the revenue will fund hiring career EMS responders to augment the volunteer force. The volunteer team is a wonderful community asset, but its success and availability is subject to volunteers' schedules. During the day, especially, when many volunteers work or attend class, coverage can come up short. In recent years, the squad has responded to more than 3,000 calls annually.

Revenue from ambulance fees would help fund some full-time emergency personnel who could cover the gaps.

Christiansburg still has a ways to go before it implements ambulance fees. At a minimum, town council must approve the idea, but no vote is scheduled. Instead, the town will sell the idea to residents first so that if fees are adopted, they will be met not with a great outcry but rather with broad agreement that they are best for the community.

THE BURGS news

Community Conversation scheduled about EMS Revenue Recovery

Community members are invited to learn more about the possibility of an EMS Revenue Recovery program by attending the EMS Revenue Recovery Community Conversation on June 7.

The program will be held at 7 p.m. in the multipurpose room at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center.

Christiansburg is currently studying the possibility of an Emergency Medical Services Revenue Recovery Program. EMS Revenue Recovery obtains reimbursement for emergency transport (ambulance) costs. Most insurance policies already cover this service. Recovered funds can be reinvested into emergency services provided by the town.

The purpose of this community conversation is to talk about why EMS Revenue Recovery is being studied, how it would work and what it would mean for the community if implemented. There will also be a question-and-answer session.

For more information about EMS Revenue Recovery, visit christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery or email info@christiansburg.org with any questions.

Submitted by the Town of Christiansburg

Christiansburg meeting scheduled on EMS Revenue Recovery

Christiansburg residents have the chance next week to learn more about the rescue squad's plan to possibly gain revenue when answering calls.

A community meeting on the potential EMS Revenue Recovery program will take place Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center.

The EMS Revenue Recovery Community Conversation is intended to discuss what has been studied, how such a plan would work and what effect it would have on the community.

For more information about EMS Revenue Recovery, visit christiansburg.org/revenuerecovery or e-mail info@christiansburg.org.

— Lerone Graham

Registration open for Christiansburg Senior Citizen's Police Academy

The Christiansburg Police Department, Christiansburg Recreation Department and Christiansburg/Montgomery Triad S.A.L.T Council are taking names for the 2012 Spring Senior Citizen's Policy Academy to be held June 18-22 at the Christiansburg Recreation Center from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day.

The program is designed to provide a better understanding between citizens and the police through education.

This is a free program open to any Christiansburg resident age 50 and older.

If you are interested in participating in the spring academy, please contact Tammy Caldwell by June 8 at 382-2349 or tcaldwell@christiansburg.org.

Submitted by the Town of Christiansburg

COMMUNITY PULSE

A listing of upcoming public meetings and events

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

What: School Board
When: 7:30 p.m., Tuesday
Where: County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St., Christiansburg
For more information: Go to mcps.org

CHRISTIANSBURG

What: Town Council
When: 7:30 p.m., Tuesday
Where: Town Hall, 100 E. Main St.
For more information Go to christiansburg.org

CHRISTIANSBURG

What: Community conversation about rescue squad fees
When: 7 p.m., Thursday
Where: Christiansburg Aquatic Center, 595 N. Franklin St.
On the agenda: The town is considering charging fees for ambulance calls. The fees haven't been set, and a series of meetings are planned to gather residents' thoughts.

Christiansburg considering new EMS fees

6/6/12 News Mess.

Marty Gordon
mgordon@ourvalley.org

Christiansburg is considering a new emergency medical service fee, and will hold a public meeting to discuss the matter on Thursday at 7 p.m., in the multi-purpose room at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center, 595 N. Franklin St. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss why the fee is being discussed, how it would work and what it would mean for the community if implemented.

More than 100 EMS providers across Virginia currently utilize similar EMS Revenue Recovery programs. Within our region, these providers include Floyd, Giles and Roanoke counties, the cities of Roanoke and Salem, and REMSI and Carilion Clinic Patient Transportation, which serve Pulaski County and the city of Radford,

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EMS fees

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respectively.

Revenue recovery 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 and/or homeowners) already allow for reimbursement for this service.

Becky Wilburn, Christiansburg's public information officer, said a revenue recovery program, like the town is considering, only charges for an ambulance transport. "If a revenue recovery program is implemented, the Rescue Squad would respond to a 911 call as they always have. If a patient is not transported to the hospital via ambulance, there is no bill. If a patient is transported, they would later receive a bill for that transport," she said.

Recovered funds could be reinvested into the emergency services provided by the town.

The cost of providing this service continues to rise, but no one will ever be denied treatment or transport based on their ability to pay.

Wilburn said citizens should always call 911 without hesitation. "Patients will always receive the same level of care, regardless of their ability to pay a bill," she said.

The costs in other areas range anywhere from $250 to $750.

Giles County started the program in 1999. Steve Davis is the president of the Giles Rescue Squad, and said they had to start charging the fee as funding has decreased. "If we hadn't done it, we probably would have closed our doors. County and United Fund monies had and continue to decrease," Davis said.

In 2010, the Giles County Rescue Squad collected $148,000 in EMS recovery fees. Last year, Davis said it went down to $78,000 as Carilion Ambulance Service started running more emergency calls in the county.

He said in some cases, his agency does send out a bill to those that use their services after another one is sent to the insurance company. But, Davis said, since the program was initiated they have never sent the matter to collections. "If they can't pay, we do not push it that far," he said.

Giles like other rescue squads in the state uses a second party billing service.

In Christiansburg, Wilburn said there is no estimate regarding how much revenue this type of program may generate.

Published: June 07, 2012

Christiansburg ponders billing plans of nearby rescue agencies

By Ken Heineck

As Christiansburg ponders whether to charge for ambulance service, all you have to do is cross the New River and look at Radford, which is doing something similar.

The city owns the ambulances and contracts with Carilion to provide EMT's. The deal is the heartbeat of the department's rescue service. According to Chief Lee Simpkins, it keeps them alive.

"It would be a big expense that the City of Radford would have to come up with. Roughly we are paying around $600,000 a year for this service, and you'd be talking about a tax increase most likely to be able to provide that service," said Simpkins.

Radford charges $200 for basic life support and $400 for advanced life support, which means hooking the patient up to an I.V. or heart monitoring machine. also checked with Roanoke county and they charge $375 and

$425 for similar services.

Each charges around ten or eleven dollars a mile. Which means in Radford, a five-mile trip from your door to the nearest hospital would cost an additional $50.

But insurance picks up a large portion of the tab if you have it, and most government run agencies only soft-bill patients, meaning it does not affect your credit.

Years ago, said Chief Simpkins, Radford brought up the same issues that the town of Christiansburg is raising today.

"Ten years ago, you could leave your job without any problem and answer fire calls and EMS calls, and in today's society, it's just not like that."

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Published: June 07, 2012

Christiansburg informs citizens of potential rescue squad plans

By Ken Heineck

No one from the public showed up to a revenue recovery meeting in Christiansburg Thursday night, but the information session on the rescue squad's potential future went on as planned.

The idea to start charging for ambulance rides was to get back some of the costs they face by doing it for free.

They receive about $700,000 from the town and Montgomery County right now.

The plan is to use the money to supplement staff and keep equipment up to date.

Captain Joe Coyle again stressed "soft" or what they are calling "compassionate billing" for those who cannot afford to pay.

"If you don't have insurance and you can't pay an ambulance bill, local government has the ability to work with you, whether that's a payment plan or a long-term process, but there won't be a financial hardship to you," said Joe Coyle, Captain of the Christiansburg Rescue Squad.

If it's passed, town leaders hope the plan could be put into practice in about a year.

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Residents not sounding alarm over ambulance fee

Posted June 9, 2012

CHRISTIANSBURG – Billed as a public conversation, Thursday's forum on the town's proposal to start charging for ambulance service was more of a monologue. Delivered mostly to a video camera.

Capt. Joe Coyle, the only paid member of Christiansburg's rescue squad, outlined the fee proposal to an audience of 10, all of whom were either town officials or staffers, or attached to a media outlet. Town spokeswoman Becky

Wilburn said she hoped the non-turnout indicated that residents don't object to the town at least exploring what has been termed the Emergency Medical Service Revenue Recovery Program.

The plan is to help the town cover some of the about $500,000 it pays to support the rescue squad each year, and to have money for upgrades to equipment and service that are bound to be needed at some point. No amount has been formally proposed for a fee, town officials have said, but something in the $500 to $600 range per service call has been discussed.

Experience in other localities that have adopted ambulance fees – nearby localities that do this include Roanoke County and city – indicates most of the charges are paid by Medicare, private insurance and Medicaid, Coyle said.

Christiansburg is still a ways from adopting a fee structure, and Town Council would eventually have to vote to approve the measure. "This isn't a done deal," Coyle said.

Still, council might take a vote in the next few months, though more details would remain to be worked out after that, Wilburn said.

Coyle emphasized several points about an eventual fee structure:
First, the rescue squad's emphasis would still be on providing the best medical care it can, regardless of a patient's ability to pay, he said.

And for people without insurance, a "compassionate billing" program would kick in to set up payment plans, write off portions of bills or otherwise adjust for a patient's ability to pay, Coyle said.

The ambulance fees would never be collected by garnishing wages or foreclosing on homes, Coyle said. No one would be sent to prison for failing to pay them.No one would be sent to prison for failing to pay them.Still, the town is feeling the need to find new revenue. "We're all aware," Coyle said. "Times are tough."

A video of Thursday's presentation will be available soon on the town's website at christiansburg.org.

By Mike Gangloff
The Roanoke Times | 381-1699

1. Wondering if EMS still gets calls for help with non-emergency transport for such things as doctor office appointments? Fee for service should decidedly reduce that misuse.

Comment by Urman — June 9, 2012 @ 9:12 am

2.

This just a blink in looking at what will become an extremely expensive proposition for Christiansbug residents if the town were to become an independent city.Ave taxes, fees, and other financial needs will all tick up by 30%…and from where I'm standing I don't see many Cburg residents who can actually afford that.

Comment by LOVE NRV — June 9, 2012 @ 9:42 am

3.

I think paying these wonderful volunteers is a great idea. As long as they dont let people's houses burn down when they havent paid; as you see on the news at least once a year.

Comment by Elizabeth Biel — June 20, 2012 @ 10:46 am

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