



## Billing for EMS Services

The practice of billing patients for EMS was authorized by legislation passed in the 2022 – 2023 New York State Budget. Prior to the passing of this legislation, fire districts and fire companies were the only agencies prohibited from billing for EMS services. Considering that all other forms of commercial ambulance companies, village fire departments, city fire departments, town EMS agencies, and volunteer ambulance agencies were able to bill for their services, the taxpayers in Niskayuna Fire District No. 1 were shortchanged for decades by the inability to recoup any of the cost of providing EMS services.

Niskayuna Fire District No. 1 (NFD 1) has operated a New York State certified ambulance service with Paramedic staffing since 1979. We also provide fire prevention, fire suppression, and rescue services to our community. All patients will continue to receive emergency medical services (EMS) regardless of their ability to pay for such services or their place of residence. The establishment of EMS fees is necessary to facilitate billing of insurance services, to support the emergency medical services operations of NFD 1, and to recover the cost of NFD 1 services provided to those who live outside of our fire district.

While historically we were not able to bill for EMS services and many thought they were getting a “free” service. There was always a cost to provide those services that was fully funded by NFD 1 taxpayer dollars. EMS billing by itself will not fully support the operations necessary to maintain the level of care and services provided by NFD 1 but it will offset some of the NFD 1 taxpayer burden necessary to maintain our current EMS and fire services.

Some key points to consider:

- EMS care will never be withheld due to a patient’s inability to pay. All patients encountered by NFD 1 will be cared for in an appropriate and professional manner without exception.
- Approximately 31% of the patients treated and transported by NFD 1 are not residents of the fire district. Without EMS billing, their care is paid for at NFD 1 taxpayer expense. EMS billing will allow NFD 1 to recover funds from the non-residents to offset taxpayer expenditures.
- EMS billing allows taxpayers to utilize insurance coverages they are already paying for through their insurance premiums thereby offsetting their NFD 1 tax liability.
- The current legislation does not allow NFD 1 to bill patients without health insurance coverage.
- Should a patient have a financial hardship, there is a process for them to follow to minimize the financial burden that is handled on a case-by-case basis through our third-party billing company Emergency Management Resources LLC.