



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.  
**C18**

For the meeting of: August 21, 2018

Date: July 17, 2018  
To: Board of Supervisors  
From: Connie Beck, Director *Ms for Connie Beck*  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Subject: Request to Increase Ambulance Fees for Service Areas 3 (Eureka) and 4 (Fortuna/Garberville)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors approve and authorize an increase in billing rates for ambulance services provided in Service Areas 3 (Eureka) and 4 (Fortuna/Garberville).

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Private Revenues

DISCUSSION:

County Code Title V – Health and Safety Division 5, Emergency Medical Services System, Section 551-6 Ambulance Service Rates requires that all rates of the schedule shall remain effective until any rate changes are amended or approved by the Board of Supervisors.

On April 5, 2018, City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. contacted the County Health Officer requesting a rate adjustment to their current fee schedule for Service Area 3, which covers Eureka area and Service Area 4, which includes the Fortuna and Garberville sub-zones as defined in the County’s Health and Safety Code, Title V, Emergency Medical Services System, Standards of Ambulance Equipment and Operations, Section 551-9 (c). The last request for a rate adjustment for these service areas were approved by your Board on

Prepared by Lara Zintmaster, AA II

CAO Approval *[Signature]*

REVIEW: Auditor *CD* County Counsel *JN* Human Resources *KKG* Other \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF ITEM:  
 Consent  
 Departmental  
 Public Hearing  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. C-8

Meeting of: 3-21-17

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT  
Upon motion of Supervisor *Bass* Seconded by Supervisor *Wilson*  
Ayes *Bass, Fennell, Sundberg, Bohn, Wilson*  
Nays \_\_\_\_\_  
Abstain \_\_\_\_\_  
Absent \_\_\_\_\_

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: 8/21/18  
By: *[Signature]*  
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

March 21, 2017. With that rate increase they were able to increase wages for Paramedics, EMTs and Communications personnel to remain competitive, purchase two additional ambulances to accommodate increased staff, and they have almost completed their mountain top dispatch repeater and base station radio system upgrade to meet Federal Communications Commission regulatory changes.

City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. has provided Advance Live Support (ALS) ambulance service in the two aforementioned service areas since the 1980's and plays an integral part in the County's Emergency Medical Services System.

City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. is requesting the increase with the intention of maintaining competitive wages for Paramedic personnel and address the issues of low reimbursement rates from Medi-Cal. City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. does not receive tax subsidies for providing emergency and non-emergency ambulance service and relies fully on fee for service. Their current collection rate is below 20%.

The "Critical Care/Specialty Care – Interfacility Transfer" service rate has been increased to address an increase in service – for instance, City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. works with Cal Ore Life Flight/REACH to provide a nurse and equipment for transports which require a nurse when emergency medical services flights are grounded due to weather. This new service rate also includes the implementation of a ST-Elevation Myocardial Infraction (STEMI) transfer system that required training, and new equipment for every ambulance.

Paramedics require extensive specialized training. Recruitment and retention has been a challenge due to a shortage of Paramedics. As state minimum wage increases, pay scales need to be adjusted to ensure competitive wages and to attract Paramedics to our area.

This request was reviewed by the County Health Officer. Supporting financial documentation was provided to the Auditor-Controller for an analysis. The Auditor-Controller reviewed the detailed financial records pertaining to the ambulance services provided by City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. and supports the proposed rate increase.

Accordingly, Public Health recommends that your Board approve the proposed rate increase. This will help to ensure that the highest level of emergency transportation service continues to be available for residents and visitors in Service Areas 3 and 4.

#### FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The request before your Board will increase City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc.'s fees for specific services ranging from 11% to 100% for insurance and private pay clients. The proposed increase does not affect the reimbursement rate from Medi-Cal and Medicare and is anticipated to affect less than 17% of calls within their service area. There is no impact to the County General Fund or the Public Health Fund.

The proposed rate increase supports the Board's Strategic Framework by protecting vulnerable populations and providing community-appropriate levels of service.

#### OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc., Humboldt County Health Officer, Humboldt County Auditor-Controller

#### ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Your Board could choose not to authorize and approve this request, however this is not recommended. To do so would impact City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc.'s ability to address recruitment and retention issues of paramedical staff.


ATTACHMENTS:

1. City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc.'s rate increase request dated April 5, 2018
2. 2018 Proposed Ambulance Rate Schedule
3. 2017 Ambulance Rate Schedule

Attachment  
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April 5, 2018

Dr. Donald Baird  
Humboldt County Public Health Department  
521 I Street  
Eureka, CA 95501



Handwritten signature and date: 12 April 2018

Dear Dr. Baird,

City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. is requesting an increase in our ambulance rates and a modification of the rate structure.

City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc. receives no subsidy from the tax base and relies fully on fee for service. We respond to all calls for assistance and provide quality emergency care and transportation, regardless of our patients' ability to pay. Medi-Cal has not increased reimbursement for ambulance responses in over 20 years, and because of Humboldt County's unusually high percentage of indigent patients and low income patients with Medi-Cal, we continue to see costs increase with no changes in reimbursement from our primary payors. Our current collection rate is below 20%.

Under the Affordable Care Act, total insurance enrollment has increased by over 1.5 million people in California. This necessitates a change in the way we structure our rates to a format that will ensure better payment from private insurers.

Since our last approved rate increase, EMT wages have increased 13%, Paramedics 7%, and Communications Personnel 12%. It remains our goal to increase wages and remain competitive and continue to attract good Paramedics to our area. Over the last 2 years, we have been able to recruit 12 EMTs and Paramedics to Humboldt County, and we find ourselves close to full staffing for the first time in over 10 years. It is imperative that we continue to bring up wages for both recruitment and retention.

In the last rate increase we promised:

- A minimum 7% wage increase for Paramedics, EMTs and Communications Personnel
- Two additional ambulances added to the fleet to accommodate the added staffing
- Replace and upgrade the existing mountain top dispatch repeaters and base station radios in response to FCC regulatory changes.

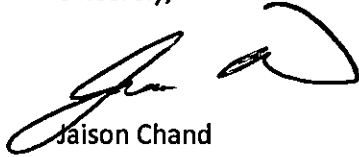
The first two items have been accomplished, and the radio system upgrade is almost complete.

With this year's increase, it is our intention to increase wages across the board and continue to improve our communications infrastructure. We are also purchasing 12 Lead Cardiac Monitors with Capnography for those units that don't have them as we take advantage in the latest advances in cardiac and respiratory care.

It's important to note that these increases only affect less than 17% percent of our calls under private insurance, since the other calls are fixed rate schedules. In other words, the actual revenue derived from a 20% rate increase is less than 4%.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Upon approval, we will be happy to provide whatever financial information is required by the Auditor-Controller.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Chand", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Chand  
Chief Operating Officer

Attachment

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**CITY AMBULANCE OF EUREKA, INC.**  
**2018 AMBULANCE RATES**

**Base Rates**

Critical Care/Specialty Care- Interfacility Transfer	\$3,200.00
Emergency Scene Response	\$1,960.00
Advanced Life Support Interfacility Transfer	\$1,960.00
Basic Life Support Interfacility Transfer	\$600.00
911 Response without transport	\$200.00

**Services**

Electrocardiogram/ 12 Lead	\$300.00
Spinal Motion Restriction/ Evaluation/ Immobilization	\$300.00
Extrication	\$300.00
CPAP/ BVM/ Intubation	\$300.00
Interosseous Infusion	\$300.00
Glucagon Administration	\$300.00
Oxygen	\$100.00
Disposable Linens	\$100.00
Night Fee (1900-0700)	\$100.00
Wait Time	\$100.00 (15 MINS)
Mileage (Per Mile)	\$25.00

Attachment  
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**CITY AMBULANCE OF EUREKA, INC.**

**dba. City Ambulance, Fortuna Rescue Ambulance, Garberville Rescue Ambulance**

**2017 AMBULANCE RATES**

	<b>EUREKA/FORTUNA</b>
Emergency	\$1,760.00
Non-Emergency	\$600.00
Critical Care Transport	\$1,900.00
MILEAGE	\$21.75
OXYGEN	\$70.00
NIGHT (1900-0700)	\$90.00
ECG MONITOR	\$100.00
WAIT TIME	\$75.00 (15 MINS)
SERVICE CALL	\$200.00
SPINAL IMMOBILIZATION	\$150.00
EXTRICATION	\$250.00

ALS = All emergency responses where a Paramedic or EMT II level unit responds and all interfacility transfers which require a paramedic or EMT II in attendance.

BLS Emergency = All emergency responses where an EMT 1 level unit responds

BLS Non- Emergency = Non emergency calls or transfers requiring only EMT 1 level care