



## City of Mercer Island Basic Life Support (BLS) Transport User Fees

### Patient Frequently Asked Questions

In February 2011, the City of Mercer Island began its Basic Life Support (BLS) Transport User Fee Program. The Program was established to create a sustainable revenue source to support essential emergency medical services. Fees from the BLS transport user fee will help cover the cost of providing emergency medical service to the Mercer Island community.

The purpose of this handout is to help you understand what to expect if you are transported from Mercer Island to a medical facility by an emergency services provider (Eastside Fire & Rescue).

#### **Is there a charge for calling 911 for a medical emergency?**

There is no fee for calling 911. The transport user fee only applies when an aid unit transports you from Mercer Island to a medical facility.

#### **How much is the transport user fee?**

Effective January 1, 2025, the ambulance transport base fee is \$1,323, plus a mileage reimbursement fee of \$24.46 per mile (set by [City Council Resolution No. 1666](#)). These fees shall remain in place until amended by the City Council by resolution. There will be no charge if a patient receives medical care but is not transported. There is no fee for calling 911.

#### **How will the billing process work for Mercer Island residents?**

Your insurance company will be billed. Even if the insurance company only pays a portion of the fee, it will be considered paid in full. You will not be responsible for any unpaid balance.

- If you are an employee who becomes sick or injured while at work, you will be treated as a resident for billing purposes.
- If you are a patient without insurance, you will be billed for the full transport user fee. However, you may be eligible for financial assistance.
- If you refuse to sign appropriate forms or have not provided complete insurance information, you will be billed directly for the full fee. An opportunity to provide insurance information and sign authorization forms will be included with the bill.

#### **How will the billing process work if I am not a Mercer Island resident?**

If you live outside Mercer Island but are transported by Eastside Fire & Rescue from Mercer Island, your insurance company will be billed. The balance not covered by insurance will be billed to you (the patient).

- If you are a patient without insurance, you will be billed for the full transport user fee. However, they may be eligible for financial assistance.
- If you refuse to sign appropriate forms or have not provided complete insurance information, you will be billed directly for the full fee. An opportunity to provide insurance information and sign authorization forms will be included with the bill.

**What if I do not have health insurance or cannot afford to pay for the service?**

You will receive service regardless of your ability to pay. You may have coverage under other policies. Many auto and homeowner insurance policies provide some medical coverage, and you are encouraged to review your various insurance policies to verify the limits of coverage under each policy.

**What options do I have to pay the bill?**

In order to maintain a fair and equitable system for all users and the taxpayers, the City and its billing services provider must issue bills according to our BLS transport billing policy. Every effort will be made to accommodate those who wish to pay on an installment plan or apply for payment relief through our financial assistance policy.

**Is financial relief available?**

Yes. The City of Mercer Island has established a financial assistance policy that is consistent with State law on hospital charity care; supported by a sliding scale and based on Federal poverty guidelines.

As a patient, you may demonstrate an inability to pay in one of two ways:

1. An application form may complete and returned, then a City of Mercer Island representative will determine if you qualify.
2. The City of Mercer Island will also accept charity care granted by the receiving medical facility as evidence of financial need and will grant proportionally equivalent relief.

**Can I refuse ambulance transport?**

Yes. Patients who are mentally competent and not a threat to themselves or others may refuse treatment and/or transportation. They will be asked to sign a Refusal of Treatment or Transportation form.

**Is there a charge for all transports in Mercer Island?**

If your condition requires Advanced Life Support (ALS) treatment and transport, then there is no transport fee. ALS services in King County are provided regionally and are fully funded by the voter-approved King County EMS (Medic One) levy.

For billing information, contact:

System Design West, LLC  
 Billing Services  
 PO Box 3510  
 Silverdale, WA 98383  
 PH: 800-238-9398  
 FAX: 360-697-1659

For program information, contact:

Chief of Administration  
 City of Mercer Island  
 9611 SE 36<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Mercer Island, WA 98040  
 PH: 206-275-7667

[www.mercerisland.gov/ambulancetransportfee](http://www.mercerisland.gov/ambulancetransportfee)