
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health
BC Ambulance Service

FLAT RATE BENEFITS PATIENTS TRAVELLING LONGER DISTANCES

VICTORIA – On Oct. 1, 2007, the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) will implement a fairer, more streamlined fee structure to ensure most patients pay the same for ambulance transport in B.C., regardless of where they live or the distance they travel, and to eliminate fees for thousands of low income individuals.

“These fee changes will make the costs for ambulance services the same for most British Columbians no matter where they live or how far they must be transported to get medical treatment,” said Health Minister George Abbott. “The new structure will also mean that up to an estimated 68,000 individuals and families with low and modest incomes will benefit by no longer paying ambulance fees.”

Fee changes for Medical Services Program (MSP) beneficiaries will:

- Establish a flat fee of \$80 per trip and eliminate the existing fee of \$54 per trip plus 50 cents per km for trips over 40 km;
- Charge a flat fee of \$80 for all ground/air combination trips;
- Eliminate an estimated 68,000 bills per year for people on MSP Premium Assistance;
- Eliminate inter-hospital transfer fees currently charged to patients and health authorities;
- Eliminate the \$50 fee for copies of patient care documents imposed under Section 4 of the Emergency and Health Services Regulation (Emergency and Health Services Act).

Fees for patients not covered by MSP and for employers when an employee is injured at work will increase to better reflect the actual cost of the service:

- Increase fees from \$396 to \$530 per trip for ground transport;
- Increase fees from \$2,400 per hour to \$2,746 per hour for helicopter transport and from \$6 to \$7 per statute mile for fixed-wing transport.

These fee changes will be revenue neutral – continuing to return approximately \$24.5 million to the BC Ambulance Service, representing just over 10 per cent of the actual cost of delivering ambulance service.

“Once patients enter the health-care system they can take multiple ambulance trips between hospitals before they receive their completed treatment,” added Abbott. “In the past that meant multiple ambulance bills in the hundreds of dollars – today, no matter how many trips are taken within the system they will receive one invoice for \$80.”

“This new system will mean cost savings for patients who must travel longer distances by ambulance,” said Abbott. “For example, if someone had to travel from Terrace, Castlegar or other Northern and Interior communities to Vancouver by air, the charge would have been \$274.00. Now, it will be \$80.00.”

Ambulance services are not an insured benefit under MSP or the Canada Health Act. Fees for ambulance service have been in place since the BCAS was established in 1974. Ambulance fees for MSP beneficiaries were last increased in 1998.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact: Sarah Plank
Public Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Health
250 952-1887 (media line)

Betty Nicholson
Communications
Emergency and Health Services Commission
250 953-3651
250 888-5880 (cell)
250 978-3235 (pager)

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