

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY

Number: 0500.0901.00

Date: 1/28/08

Area: Financial Management

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Subject: Transport Billing

Approved:

1.0 General

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue (NWFR) provides emergency medical care and transport services. The transported patient is billed for these services. NWFR contracts with an outside vendor to provide billing services for these transports.

2.0 Purpose

It is the purpose of this policy to establish a system to accurately track and audit the billing procedure to ensure that each ambulance transport is billed appropriately.

3.0 Scope

Various personnel, including emergency medical employees and office staff, will be responsible for completing their assigned portion of the billing procedure. The Fire Chief has overall responsibility for ensuring that the billing procedure is completed.

4.0 Policy

4.1 Definitions

Ambulance Billing Authorization: The document the patient signs to authorize the District to bill for services

Demographics Document: The document containing patient information which is provided by the facility receiving that patient

FireHouse: The report writing software program currently being used by the District.

MIR: Medical Incident Report

Systems Design: The billing company that the District currently contracts with for transport fees

4.2 Policy Statements

4.2.1 After each transport is completed and the patient has arrived at the receiving facility, the emergency medical employee responsible for the patient's care during transport will obtain a patient demographics document from that facility.

4.2.2 If physically capable, the patient will be required to sign an Ambulance Billing Authorization allowing the District to bill their insurance directly for the transport. If the patient is unable to sign the release due to their medical inability

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to do so, the District will obtain the signature of an authorized representative of the patient or the signature of the receiving facility. The District will then bill the patient's insurance as a courtesy to the patient.

- 4.2.3 The demographics document and Ambulance Billing Authorization will be sent with the patient's MIR to Systems Design for billing.
- 4.2.4 Upon receipt of the MIR by Systems Design, an account is set-up and all charges with sufficient information are billed directly to an insurance company. Those accounts without sufficient billing information are billed directly to the patient along with a form requesting insurance information.
- 4.2.5 Items billed directly to an insurance company are reviewed monthly. Rebilling and additional information are provided as necessary. After all appropriate insurance payments have been received, a private statement is generated and mailed to the patient if there is a legally collectible balance.
- 4.2.6 Patient inquiries are handled via a nationwide toll free telephone line to Systems Design. All employees of Systems Design are cross-trained on all accounts to ensure the person answering the phone will generally be able to handle the patient's questions without having to forward the call to someone else.
- 4.2.7 Payments are typically mailed directly to Systems Design. They are always made payable to North Whatcom Fire and Rescue, never to Systems Design. Payments are deposited by Systems Design into a bank account established by the Whatcom County Treasurer's office, with copies of the Treasurer's receipt mailed to North Whatcom Fire and Rescue. Systems Design has "deposit only" access to this account.
- 4.2.8 Systems Design initiates any refunds to patients or insurance companies by the use of a "Refund Request Form" along with the supporting documentation. Refunds will be processed through the established voucher process for accounts payable.
- 4.2.9 As long as a patient has a private balance owing, they will continue to receive monthly statements until the account is paid in full or determined to be uncollectible. If Systems Design has received no payment and no contact from the patient after the second statement is mailed, they will attempt to make phone contact to encourage the patient to set up a payment plan. Systems Design explains that there are no finance charges and even a small monthly payment will demonstrate the patient's cooperation in getting the account paid.

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- 4.2.10 For those accounts that result in mail returned, phone disconnected, or no response, Systems Design will make a final call to the hospital to see if they have any updated information. Typically, these accounts have already been turned over to collections or written off by the hospital. In the rare situation that the hospital has new billing information, Systems Design will follow up with this information. If no further information is available from the hospital, these accounts are deemed uncollectible. A list of patients deemed uncollectible is available in the monthly reports sent to the District by Systems Design.
- 4.2.11 Occasionally, a patient will request the District to provide a partial or whole forgiveness of a bill. Partial or whole forgiveness of a bill is at the discretion of the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief shall complete a Waiver Authorization and send to Systems Design with a copy of the patient forgiveness request letter.
- 4.2.12 After the final charges for the month have been entered, Systems Design will perform a month-end process that generates the monthly private statements, ages the accounts receivables and produces the monthly reports, which are sent to the Fire District by Systems Design. These reports detail the monthly activity on the District's accounts.
- 4.2.13 Because Systems Design works closely with the patients and the District to resolve billing issues and does not send accounts to collections, a reasonable degree of flexibility and common sense are inherent in this policy.

5.0 Control Mechanisms

- 5.1 The District Business Manager shall be responsible for reviewing the Transport Billing policies and procedures whenever necessary, but in no instance shall such review be less than annually.

Approved: _____
Commission Chair
North Whatcom Fire and Rescue

Date: _____

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