



Office of the City Manager

PUBLIC HEARING  
May 16, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Gil Dong, Fire Chief

Subject: First Responder Fee Adjustment

#### RECOMMENDATION

Conduct a public hearing and upon conclusion, adopt a Resolution authorizing the Fire Department to establish a First Responder Fee for the purposes of defraying costs associated with the delivery of Emergency Medical Services.

#### FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The fee is expected to generate \$361,000 in net revenue from medical or auto insurance payments for emergency medical response, treatment, and care provided by paramedics on fire engines or trucks. The fee will be deposited into General Fund Account 010-6405-341-7900.

The revenue projection is based on the number of ambulance transports (6,850) multiplied by the percentage of transported patients with commercial insurance (22%) multiplied by \$300 (First Responder Fee) multiplied by the expected collection percentage (80%).

The \$300 fee was determined by totaling the hourly benefitted rate of an engine or truck company personnel, apparatus fuel, maintenance and lease costs, administrative staff and billing support, and disposable medical supplies used by first responders. The First Responder Fee would only be charged to patients that receive emergency medical care or assessment and are transported to the hospital. Patients who are not transported to the hospital would not be assessed the fee.

The fee would create an additional \$2,100,000 in billable revenue, but \$1,731,000 would be waived or written off due to financial hardship or capitation of Medicare or Medi-Cal reimbursement. Patients determined to be in a financial hardship may have the fee waived by submitting a hardship waiver according to current city policies.

First Responder Fee

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The proposed First Responder Fee would be charged to a patient who is medically assessed by fire department first responders on emergency medical calls, including auto accidents or other traumatic injuries and transported to the hospital. First Responder Fees can be fully or partially covered by commercial medical insurance carriers. The First Responder Fee is separate billable item than the ambulance transport fee.

The First Responder Fee is not a new concept. There are numerous fire agencies in in the San Francisco Bay Area or California that charge a First Responder Fee including:

**Neighboring Agencies**

Albany Fire Department	\$300.00
Contra Costa Fire Protection District	\$433.40
Corte Madera Fire	\$325.16
Moraga-Orinda Fire Protection District	\$446.00
Novato Fire Protection District	\$325.00
San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District	\$459.00

**Agencies Outside the SF Bay Area**

City of Sacramento Fire Department	\$ 96.00
Consumes Fire District (Elk Grove and Galt)	\$153.00
Folsom Fire	\$225.00
Long Beach Fire Department	\$250.00
Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District	\$275.00

EMS RESPONSE

The Berkeley Fire Department responds to 15,028 service calls annually. Of these service calls, 10,066 (67%) are emergency medical responses. Of the 10,066 emergency medical calls, 6,850 patients are transported to the hospital. On emergency medical calls, the Fire Department responds with a fire engine or truck with three firefighters including one who must be a paramedic and a paramedic ambulance.

A fire engine or truck responds to medical calls to provide faster care and treatment and to provide additional personnel to assist with patient lifting and packaging. The average response time of a fire engine is 4.5 minutes from the time of dispatch. On many occasions, all of Berkeley’s ambulances are committed to other emergency calls; therefore, the firefighters on the engine or truck care for the patient until a mutual aid ambulance arrives.

The cost to provide emergency medical care by first responders is \$14,136,872. (67% of the operating budget for fire operations).

First Responder Fee

FRALS REVENUE

The Fire Department annually allocates \$560,000 from Measure GG towards the First Responder Advanced Life Support (FRALS) program and receives \$300,000 annually from the Alameda County Emergency Medical Services District through a FRALS agreement that expires on November 1, 2017. The City has been advised by the EMS Agency that it intends to eliminate FRALS reimbursements. The proposed fee will offset the loss of FRALS payments from the Alameda County EMS Agency.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with the action requested in this report.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The City is projected to lose \$300,000 annually in FRALS payments from Alameda County EMS Agency and instituting a First Responder Fee will help defray the costs of providing 9-1-1 emergency medical services on First Responder engines or trucks.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Take no action.

CONTACT PERSON

Gil Dong, Fire Chief, Fire Department, (510) 981-3473

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Public Hearing Notice

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

FIRST RESPONDER FEE

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley is committed to providing emergency medical services to its residents and community regardless of their ability to pay; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Fire Department responds to emergency medical calls with first responders, and

WHEREAS, the cost for providing first responder emergency medical care may be defrayed by charging a user fee; and

WHEREAS, a First Responder Fee for emergency medical calls has never been established; and

WHEREAS, the adoption of a First Responder Fee will defray the costs of providing excellent emergency medical care in the City of Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, the Alameda County Emergency Medical Services Agency notified the City of Berkeley that it intends to eliminate its FRALS reimbursement of \$300,000 annually; and

WHEREAS, the cost of the First Responder Fee will be covered by most commercial health insurance; and

WHEREAS, the revenue generated from the First Responder Fee will not exceed the cost of providing such service; and

WHEREAS, the collected fee will be deposited into the General Fund Account 010-6405-341-7900; and

WHEREAS, patients who meet the City's hardship requirements may have the fee waived.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that a "First Responder Fee" of \$300 be charged to patients transported by emergency ambulance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be in full force and effect on and after  
July 1, 2017.

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL  
FIRST RESPONDER FEE**

Notice is hereby given by the City Council of the City of Berkeley that a public hearing will be conducted by said city council of the City of Berkeley at which time and place all persons may attend and be heard upon the following:

The Fire Department is proposing to establish a First Responder Fee of \$300 to be charged to patients transported by emergency ambulance, to defray costs associated with the delivery of emergency medical services. The FY2017 operating budget for the Fire Department' first responder emergency medical care is \$14 million. The projected amount to be collected with the First Responder Fee is \$361,000 and will not exceed the cost of the EMS program. The program is funded from the General Fund and the revenue collected will be deposited into a General Fund revenue account.

The hearing will be held on **May 16, 2017** in the City Council Chambers, 2134 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. For further information, please contact David Brannigan, Deputy Fire Chief, at (510) 981-3473.

A copy of the staff report for this hearing will be available on the City's website at [www.CityofBerkeley.info](http://www.CityofBerkeley.info) as of **May 4, 2017**.

Written comments should be mailed or delivered directly to the City Clerk, 2180 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704, in order to ensure delivery to all Councilmembers and inclusion in the agenda packet. Communications to the Berkeley City Council are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website.

**Please note: e-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required, but if included in any communication to the City Council, will become part of the public record.** If you do not want your email address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service or in person to the City Clerk. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the City Clerk at 981-6900 or [clerk@cityofberkeley.info](mailto:clerk@cityofberkeley.info) for further information.

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**Per Government Code 6062A**

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I hereby certify that the Notice for this Public Hearing of the Berkeley City Council was posted at the display case located near the walkway in front of Council Chambers, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr Way, as well as on the City's website, on **May 4, 2017**.



Mark Numainville, City Clerk

