

**Questions provided by Dorothy Yetter.  
Answers by Austin Prince (Rural Metro Fire)**

*When do you bill for services to a person who is not covered by contract, including these:*

**Vehicle accident/Traffic Collision**

RM responds as part of a group response along with AMR and law enforcement. In addition to responding with firefighters that are EMT's to assist with patient care of crash victims, and depending on the severity of the crash scene and number vehicles/patients involved, RM crews perform critical assignments such as incident command to direct overall scene operations, direct traffic to ensure a safe working area, stop fuel leaks on damaged vehicles, apply absorbent to oil and other spills, clean up/sweep glass and debris from roadway, perform extrication of entrapped victims using the Jaws-of-Life, neutralize electrical operating systems and supplemental restraint systems of newer vehicles, suppress potential fires, establish landing zones for helicopters, and check for hazardous materials (ie: semi truck crashes).

**Lift Assists**

Rapidly becoming a sizable percentage of RM's call volume. And because of its popularity, this service is not typically provided by AMR, allowing them to focus on priority medical responses. However, RM is sent to all requests for lift assistance within the unprotected area, including non-members. RM firefighters (that are also EMT's) provide a medical evaluation to determine if any injury has occurred or if an underlying condition contributed to the fall. RM also provides fall prevention education for inside the home and may even help with referrals when it appears the patient may need a higher level of care. RM also conducts courtesy smoke and carbon monoxide alarm checks while on scene and may replace old alarms or batteries if needed.

**Medical Emergency**

RM's staffing model that incorporates trained and experienced EMT's (with Standing Orders from a Physician Advisor) on a fire engine, as well as fire stations strategically located throughout the unprotected area, provides for a quick and efficient response to render medical assistance ahead of the ambulance, especially in outlying areas. RM units are equipped with Basic Life Support (BLS) equipment, with some advanced gear in the event a higher level EMT (EMT Advanced, EMT Intermediate or Paramedic) is working on a particular day. Units also carry a critically important 12-lead heart monitor that can quickly diagnose an impending heart attack. Early recognition of this condition facilitates a quicker activation of the system that can get the patient to a Medford catheter lab. Often, RM units are also on scene prepared to guide in a medical helicopter that can accelerate the transport, drive the ambulance, or help in the back of the ambulance while enroute to the hospital. RM has received accolades from the American Heart Association for being an integral part of this system that has seen a dramatic improvement in cardiac arrest survivability.....all because a fire truck went to a medical emergency. However, in the event the attack is imminent, it can easily require 4-6 personnel to deliver high-performance CPR (compressions, intubation, respirations, IV access, drug administration, delivering AED shocks, and consoling family members).

RM's response also includes successes in stroke management, reversing diabetic complications and alleviating respiratory distress through the early application of medical oxygen and albuterol treatments. Firefighters also come prepared with the ability to stabilize a trauma patient (ie: falling from a ladder while hanging Christmas lights, etc) to protect against spinal injury. Just loading a patient safely onto a backboard takes more than the two EMT's on an ambulance. RM firefighters facilitate rapid treatment and transport, and are skilled at gurney

maneuvering and finding creative ways to gently extricate a non-ambulatory patient in distress from an upper floor bedroom, back room of a single-wide mobile, or across terrain after an injury sustained by someone taking a spill outside. The list goes on including obtaining vital signs, gathering medications and obtaining patient history.

RM has been responding to medical emergencies in the unprotected area for over 40 years, not only because it's in the best interest of patient care, but because it is a national standard for fire agencies across the Rogue Valley and the nation.

### **Fire alarm**

RM response is either initiated by the occupant who has an alarm going off, or from a monitored alarm company such as SOS, Sonitrol, ADT, etc that has received an activation, and has made a request for a fire response via 911. RM crews treat all alarms as a fire until proven otherwise. In the absence of the property occupant, RM will do an exterior evaluation of the property to look for evidence of smoke or fire. If none, efforts continue to locate the RP to provide access. However, if any evidence of fire is noted, RM will force entry and take appropriate actions. After entry is made and its determined to be a malfunction or false alarm, RM will attempt to reset the alarm system or otherwise leave the occupant with a working alarm. In the case of carbon monoxide alarm activations, RM will scan the entire location using special CO detecting devices to locate the source and secure the hazard.

### **Smoke Investigation**

This type of incident isn't billed under this classification. If the smoke is investigated and found to be a fire incident that requires mitigation, it is subject to an invoice for services rendered for that situation (ie: structure fire).

### **Other types of Investigation (e.g. Gas smell)**

RM responds with the idea that a gas smell may be a result of a leak, which may pose a fire or explosive hazard. RM will attempt to locate the source of the smell. Special monitoring equipment used by RM may assist with this. When dealing with natural gas, most action is taken by Avista. RM's involvement can often extend into evacuation or stand-bys if the threat for fire or explosion is significant.

Other investigations are handled similarly, such as unexplainable odors, explosion sounds, unknown type of fire seen from a distance, crash that is "heard only", and many other public perceptions of an emergency. Invoicing is not applicable unless a problem is located, and action is needed to mitigate.

### **Structure fire when there is a contract with the other private company**

As required as part of an ISO rating, to ensure the safety of the occupants, and the need to ensure the address provided is accurate (contract status), RM will respond to ALL structure fires in the unprotected area. Contractual agreements are not determined until physically arriving on scene to confirm the address. In the absence of any other private fire company on scene assertively making contact with the RM incident commander in accordance with NIMS ICS, and claiming that the property owner is paying for their service, RM firefighters will fully engage to rescue occupants, suppress flames, keep fire from spreading, and salvaging valuables. Invoicing is only applied to that period of time when justifiable action was taken prior to RM fully relinquishing the incident to the other company.

Due to the competitive nature of the over-lapping fire coverage formula inside the unprotected area, mutual assistance between competitive agencies is not expected or implied on non-

contracted properties beyond the rescue of any occupants. Any request for RM to continue services by the property owner or the other private company may be subject to invoicing, respectively. During this engagement, RM reserves the right to establish full incident command and control, and will respectfully request the other private agency to stand-down until the fire is brought under control, allowing RM and its mutual aid partners to disengage. These rules of engagement are also necessary due to the unknown level of training and liability insurance coverage (ie: minimum standards) of the other company.

### **Other incidents or service call types (not mentioned above)**

**Wildland fires** – This is generally a mutual aid response with ODF and is not subject to invoicing for perimeter control actions during fire season, but is invoiced when RM is dedicated solely to the protection of structures, during off-season when ODF is not staffed or available to respond, and year-round on any wildfire occurring in the “Green Area” outside of the city limits of Grants Pass.

**Flue fires** – RM crews will check for fire that may have escaped from the flue and extended into walls, ceiling, attic or roof (see structure fires). Otherwise, duties include extinguishing the stove and flue pipe, and checking smoke alarms for working condition.

**Vehicle fires** – Any transportation vehicle (cars, trucks, RV’s, semi, etc). RM will not only respond to stop spread, but manage potential hazmat situations with transportation vehicles commonly found on the interstate. Some vehicles, depending on size, content or materials used in manufacturing (magnesium) often require lots of water.

**Open Burns** – RM will only respond to burns known to contain illegal materials or has escaped control of the RP for the purpose of extinguishing. Illegal material burns are then reported back to DEQ for further follow up.

**Machinery rescue** – For example, farm equipment or manufacturing facility equipment. RM responds similar to that of vehicle crashes. Some machinery may be very heavy or made from very thick materials that require special tools carried by RM. (Most common would be tractor rolled over onto subject in a field.)

**Surface water rescue** – Due to several miles of Rogue and Applegate Rivers, RM staff are also certified in water rescue techniques (RM has several nationally-recognized instructors). In support of the Sheriff’s Office and Search & Rescue, RM crews are equipped and trained to conduct hasty bank searches for missing rafters, boaters or swimmers, and has the equipment and training necessary to affect water-based, shore-based and boat-based rescues. During flood events, RM is instrumental in when evacuations are needed.

**Over-embankment/low-steep angle rescue** – Similar to water rescues, RM responds with rope and equipment necessary to reach, treat and extract subjects in hard to reach locations.

**Remote patient extraction** – Similar to water and rope rescues, RM has a 4x4 side-by-side UTV with patient transport capabilities that can reach, treat and extract subjects in hard to reach (remote) locations.

**Domestic animal rescue** – RM members are trained and equipped to rescue domestic animals, including dogs, cats, horses and cows. RM engines all carry special oxygen delivery masks designed for dogs, cats and other small animals suffering from smoke inhalation.

**General public assistance not listed above** – Basically, if cops can't shoot it or take it to jail, we tend to get the call.

**Sporting event stand-by** – For example, if a non-member high school requests a dedicated EMT standby for a football game.

**Fire investigation/cause determination, public education, fire prevention, occupancy inspection, and home safety assessments** – RM has trained, certified, skilled and passionate personnel willing to deliver any of these services to non-members on request.

In summary, RM's invoicing practice is only applied when services are rendered to those who are not current RM members in the "unprotected area", including those who are not residents of this area (ie: visitors). Invoicing is determined by upper administrative staff and chief fire personnel, after a careful consideration and review of the field reports submitted by crews that define the services delivered. No fees are sent to current RM members for any of the services outlined above. And in some cases, invoicing is waived entirely for non-members when minimal or no action is taken.

If RM leaves the unprotected area to provide services in any neighboring public tax-funded fire district or the city of Grants Pass, invoicing is not applicable in accordance with the RVFCA Mutual Aid Agreement. Some public fire districts have even adopted the same invoicing formula in order to recover expenses from services rendered to visitors that are not tax-payers in their district.