

Emergency Services – Free for Residents, No Free Ride for Insurance Companies

As part of its ongoing efforts to offset the rising costs of public safety services without financially impacting residents, the City of Palm Desert is joining the neighboring cities of Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage and will start billing patients' health insurers for emergency services beginning this September.

There will be no changes to emergency services in Palm Desert as a result of this effort. As has been the case for more than three decades, Palm Desert residents will not be billed or have to pay anything out of pocket for emergency services.

Health insurers for visitors and residents will be billed for ambulance trips and related fees in an effort to end what has amounted to a subsidy of private insurance companies using public funds.

Residents of Palm Desert, Indian Wells, and Rancho Mirage will not be billed for the balance that an insurer does not cover. Visitors to these cities will receive a bill for any unpaid balance. Residency will be determined by the primary address that a patient or family member provides. Uninsured patients can contact the City for a hardship waiver.

While residents will not receive a bill, they will likely receive an explanation of benefits from their insurance company identifying the amount that the insurer paid and any unpaid balance. This explanation of benefits is not a bill and the City is not involved in its distribution or the collection of any unpaid balance. They may also receive a request for insurance information from the City's billing provider, Wittman Enterprises.

For more information about emergency services in Palm Desert and the City's efforts to contain public safety costs, please call 760-776-6326 or email saryan@cityofpalmdesert.org.