

Village's ambulance fees raised

Written by Mark Jaeger

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Even with increases, officials say they remain in middle of the pack

The Fredonia Village Board increased the rates for the Northern Ozaukee Ambulance last week, following recommendations made by LifeQuest, its private billing service.

The base rate for residents is \$425, an increase of \$75, and a base rate of \$500 for non-residents, a hike of \$100.

With an average of 54 basic transports a year, the LifeQuest analysis projected the increase will result in nearly \$5,000 in additional revenue for the ambulance service.

The charge for residents needing advanced life support measures was increased from \$400 to \$525. The non-resident charge for the same level of service increased from \$450 to \$625.

With about 110 advanced life support calls per year, LifeQuest said the hike will boost ambulance revenues by more than \$18,000.

With charges for other ambulance services also adjusted by the hike, the billing company estimated that the ambulance's average annual charges should rise by more than \$33,000.

Because it is estimated that about 70% of ambulance bills are collected, the company said the net result of the increases should be nearly \$24,000 in revenue.

The mileage charge for residents was increased from \$8.50 to \$11 per mile, and the non-resident charge was boosted from \$9 to \$12 per mile. The ambulance logs about 3,100 miles a year on patient runs.

The new rates went into effect Tuesday, Feb. 1.

The last time the department increased its ambulance fees was in 2007.

Trustee Scott Ehaney, chairman of the Public Safety Committee, said even with the increases the village's fees are comparable to neighboring communities.

"We are on the low side and with the increase we would be slightly below the average," Ehaney said.

Trustee Don Dohrwardt suggested it would make sense to increase the fees even more, because most ambulance charges don't come out of the pocket of the patient.

"If most of these payments are coming from insurance companies, I think we should be at least in the middle of the pack. I think our fees should be based at a reasonable level, not a discount level," Dohrwardt said.

Port Washington and Saukville, which also use LifeQuest for its ambulance billing, are also in

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the process of reviewing new rates.