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Making it pay

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The Baker City Fire Department provides ambulance service for people in distress in Baker County.

They don't always get paid, however.

Thanks to a system-wide effort that includes attention to detail by the firefighters on emergency runs and the billing clerk in City Hall, however, collections are up.

It's a painful reality of ambulance operations that hospitals also know all too well: **If you fail to meet a public or private insurer's demands for information, they'll fail to pay you for services rendered.**

It's akin to the challenge law enforcement faces, where a district attorney must relay the prosecutor's legal burden to police officers on the street. A misstep in an arrest or investigation can put a successful prosecution in jeopardy.

Similarly, failure to gather certain information during an emergency ambulance call jeopardizes the ability of the city to collect from an insurance company.

Collections on ambulance runs have improved from less than 50 percent two years ago to almost 75 percent in this current year.

While no one is stepping forward to take the pat on the back, we suspect it has something to do with billing clerk Marydee Rea communicating her needs to Chief Tim Frost, who in turn gets results from his crew.

Sure, saving a person's life is job one for firefighters.

But attention to details helps, and such steps don't have to detract from care.

By assuring a higher rate of compensation to the fire department, costs to the taxpayer are mitigated and the service remains funded and therefore effective.

And that makes us all safer in the long run.