

Guidance for Use of Emergency Ambulance Aid

On December 26, 2024, the Department of Revenue will distribute aid payments to licensed ambulance services consistent with Minnesota law. 2024 Session Law Chapter 122 outlines the appropriate uses and various timing provisions for licensed ambulance services to use that aid. This document highlights some key points and provides some general guidance on using this funding.

Key Dates

- Funds will be released to qualifying ambulance services on December 26, 2024
- Funds must be spent or *encumbered* by December 31, 2025
- All licensed ambulance services will be required to report on how they used the funding by February 15, 2026. The new Office of EMS will release a reporting form in early 2025. Make sure to keep all receipts, and invoices as supporting documentation.

Timing of Expenditures

Funds must be spent or encumbered by December 31, 2025. EMSRB recommends expenditures occur on or after July 1, 2024, to align with state fiscal year 2025, which is when the funds were appropriated.

For expenses that were incurred prior to July 1, 2024, but were financed with either a loan or bonding, this aid could be used to pay any portion of the outstanding balance due as of July 1, 2024 as the cost is still being incurred.

Encumbrance Defined

Per Minnesota law, encumbering funds means *“the commitment of a portion or all of an allotment to meet an obligation expected to pay for goods or services.”* For example:

- For example, an ambulance service has previously entered into a contract to purchase a new ambulance. The funds are set aside, but payment is delayed until ambulance delivery in 2026. Such funds are encumbered and remain valid under the law. An ambulance service could also use aid funding for contracts entered into prior to July 1, 2024, if payment has not yet been made.

While most funds should be spent by December 31, 2025, encumbered funds allow for flexibility in specific scenarios such as long lead times for equipment or vehicle delivery. Keep clear documentation of contracts and obligations to meet reporting requirements.

Acceptable Uses

As outlined in the law, the acceptable uses are broad. There was recognition that the needs of ambulance services could vary. In general, there are two categories of expenses that can be paid for using this funding operational and capital. It is very important to note that the aid spent under this law must be spent *ONLY for items that support ambulance services providing service in Minnesota*. Services that have responsibilities outside the state must not use these funds for operations outside of Minnesota. Additionally, the primary focus is ambulance services and not other entities within the healthcare system. **This document is not an all-inclusive list, but rather one with common uses and addressing questions that have been received to date.**

Operational Expenses

In many instances operational expenses are the most common for an ambulance service. The law creates a definition for operational expenses.

“Operational expenses mean costs related to personnel expenses, supplies and equipment, fuel, vehicle maintenance, travel, education, fundraising, and expenses associated with obtaining advanced life support intercepts.”

Personnel Expenses

Examples of acceptable uses under this category include but are not limited as this is NOT an all-inclusive list:

- Salary and payroll expenses for personnel, including payroll taxes. This could also include pay related to EMS personnel being on-call.
- Compensation to EMS Medical Directors and/or their required professional insurance coverages
- Financial bonuses for employees/volunteers. More specific examples could be payment of bonuses to individuals responding to more EMS calls, or individuals taking higher amounts of on call time. Any program implemented should be done with clear and transparent organizational policies to prevent misuse.
- Costs associated with recruiting or retaining personnel. This could include offering relocation assistance or other incentives.
- Costs associated with providing insurance benefits to personnel including workers compensation and life insurance.
- Costs associated with providing various retirement benefits.
- Employee onboarding costs including background checks.
- Uniforms for ambulance service personnel.

Supplies/Equipment

Supplies and equipment are a common expense category for ambulance services. Services that are considering upgrading their license from BLS to ALS or PT ALS can use these funds to purchase the needed equipment to do so. Examples of expenses in this category include but are not limited to:

- Telehealth Equipment and subscriptions
- Patient Care Devices- Including stretchers, AED's cardiac monitors, ventilators, suction units, automated CPR devices, IV pumps etc. Would also include any needed accessories and maintenance plans.
- Communication Equipment: radios, repeaters, pagers, text-based incident notification (Active 911/Iamresponding etc.)
- Data collection equipment: Computers, PCR software expenses, costs with linking 911 computer aided dispatch to PCR software.
- Routine Equipment- Stethoscope, B/P cuffs, bags for carrying equipment.
- Patient treatment supplies: oxygen delivery equipment, airways devices, bandages, gauze, defibrillator pads, etc.
- Personal Protective Equipment: Bullet proof vests, PAPRS (Powered Air Purifying Respirators)
- Infection Control Supplies: Disinfectant supplies and delivery devices, isopods,
- Medications: Would include all medications prescription or over the counter used by the ambulance service

Vehicle Maintenance and Fuel

- Any and all expenses related to maintaining and fueling vehicles that are used for the provision of emergency medical services by a licensed ambulance service.

Travel

- Expenses incurred by bringing staff in from other areas.
- Expenses incurred by sending staff to training and education in state and out of state.

Education

- Continuing education courses including required refresher courses. If you use funding for the purpose of refresher education for EMTs, AEMTs, or Paramedics, be sure not to also submit reimbursements to the state for the Volunteer Education Reimbursement program as double dipping is not permitted.
- Initial education courses including EMT or Paramedic. Be sure not to also submit reimbursement requests to the state for the Volunteer Education Reimbursement program as double dipping is not permitted.
- Community Paramedic/Community EMT courses or tuition
- EMR courses
- Professional development/EMS conferences.
- Student loan reimbursement to encourage recruitment and retention.
- Educational equipment including certification courses (ACLS/CPR/PALS/ITLS/PHTLS etc.)
- Textbooks, training mannequins, and other types of training equipment

Fundraising Expenses

- Costs of contracting with a company to coordinate collection of monetary donations.
- Costs associated with purchasing food sold for fundraising purposes (pancake breakfasts/fried chicken dinners/ etc.)
 - **NOTE:** State law generally does not permit the purchase of alcohol or firearms with state funds

Capital Expenses

The aid law also allows the use of funds for capital expenses. Capital expenses are defined as

“expenses that are incurred by a licensed ambulance service provider for the purchase, improvement, or maintenance of long-term assets to improve the efficiency or capability of the ambulance services, with an expected useful life of greater than 5 years.”

Several types of equipment previously identified in the equipment and supplies section could equally be categorized as capital expenses. Additionally, the purchase of new/used ambulances would also fall under this category. Additional investments into building construction or renovation for an ambulance station could also meet the definition of being a capital expense. In the case of multi-use buildings, it is recommended that the percent of construction costs that this funding is put towards does not exceed the percentage of square footage used for the ambulance service.

Additional Guidance

This listing of potential acceptable uses included in this document is intended to provide high level guidance. It is not intended to serve as a must use list. If ambulance services have specific questions as to whether an expense would be considered an acceptable use, they are encouraged to contact us via email at aid.ems.emsrb@state.mn.us for a preliminary determination.