



# Ground Ambulance Organizations: Data Collection for Public Safety-Based Organizations Call

Moderated by: Joanna Pahl  
March 12, 2020 — 1:00 pm ET

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Operator: At this time, I would like to welcome everyone to today's Medicare Learning Network® event. All lines will remain in a listen only mode until the question and answer session. This call is being recorded and transcribed. If anyone has any objections, you may disconnect at this time.

I will now turn the call over to Joanna Pahl. Thank you. You may begin.

## Announcements & Introduction

Joanna Pahl: Thank you, Dorothy. I'm Joanna Pahl from the Provider Communication Group at CMS. And I'm your moderator today.

Welcome to this Medicare Learning Network call, Ground Ambulance Data Collection for Public Safety Based Organizations. Before we get started, you received a link to the presentation in your confirmation email. The presentation is available at the following URL, [go.cms.gov/mln-events](https://go.cms.gov/mln-events). Again, that URL is [go.cms.gov/mln-events](https://go.cms.gov/mln-events).

Today's event is not intended for the press. And the remarks are not considered on the record. If you are a member of the press, you may listen in. But please refrain from asking questions during the question and answer session. If you have inquiries, contact [press@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:press@cms.hhs.gov).

Today, I have Sarah Shirey-Losso here at CMS Central Office with me. And we also have presenters joining us from the RAND Corporation. I'll now turn the call over to Andrew Mulcahy.

## Presentation

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Thanks, Joanna. My name is Andrew Mulcahy from the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization that's helping CMS design and implement the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System. I'll be presenting today along with two of my RAND colleagues, Drs. Sara Heins and Christine Buttorff. We were planning for Dr. Lisa Sontag-Padilla to join us today. But she like many other folks right now is off today due to a school closure.

I'll pause for a minute to give everyone a chance to locate and open a copy of the slides for today's call. It's important to have the slides in front of you. You can follow along with our comments and examples.

The other presenters and I will call out slide numbers as we proceed today. So, you can follow along. Before we get started, note that the acronyms used in the presentation are listed on slide 2 for reference.

Moving to slide 3, today, we'll cover data collection and reporting for public safety-based ground ambulance organizations. We encourage provider-based ground ambulance organizations including hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and other Medicare providers of services to join us on an additional call scheduled for April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

We'll use the term public safety-based organization throughout this presentation to refer to ground ambulance organizations that share operational cost with fire departments, police departments, and/or other public safety entities. We recognize that there is tremendous variations in how ground ambulance organizations are



organized, financed and operated. Not all of what we covered today will be relevant to your specific public safety-based ground ambulance organization. We encourage you to review the data collection instrument instructions carefully and ask if you have any questions.

If you do have questions today related to public safety-based ground ambulance organizations that aren't covered during the presentation, you can ask them during the Q&A session at the end or send them to the CMS ambulance data collection email address, which is [AmbulanceDataCollection](mailto:AmbulanceDataCollection@cms.hhs.gov), all one word, [@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:@cms.hhs.gov). The email address is also listed on slide 39 of this presentation.

If you have more general questions, there are several other resources posted on CMS's Ambulances Services Center website that might provide answers including a printable version of the data collection instrument, a Frequently Asked Questions document, and slides and transcripts from prior calls. You can reach the website by Googling CMS Ambulances Services Center. The top result will be the [cms.gov](https://www.cms.gov) website.

If those resources don't address your questions, again, you can email CMS at [AmbulanceDataCollection@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:AmbulanceDataCollection@cms.hhs.gov). You can also hold your questions to ask during a live online Q&A session scheduled in about two weeks. The details for this additional Q&A session will be emailed to all of the attendees of our prior calls and posted on the CMS Ambulances Services Center website.

Slide 4 lists the sections of the data collection instrument where questions may be answered differently for public safety-based ground ambulance organizations compared to those that are not public safety-based. The rest of our slides today are organized by section and in this order. Slide 5 lists the sections of the instrument where we expect responses will be very similar for public safety-based organizations and for nonpublic safety-based ambulance organizations.

We won't spend much time reviewing these sections today. If you have questions about these sections, we encourage you to review our earlier call that provided an overview of the entire data collection instrument. A good rule is to consider only your ground ambulance operation when answering questions in these sections unless otherwise specified in the instructions.

## Section 2 — Section 2: Organizational Characteristics

Moving onto slide 6, after the general survey instructions in section 1 of the instrument, section 2 is the first part of the instrument with questions for your organization. The purpose of this section is to learn more about your ambulance organization. Your answers to these questions in this section will often determine which questions and instructions you see later on.

Most relevant to today's call, your responses to questions 8 through 10 in this section determine whether the data collection instrument considers your organization to be public safety-based or not. Question 8 asks what category best describes your ground ambulance operation. Answering, A, just fire department-based or, B, police or other public safety-based including all hazards organizations is the first step in reporting that you're a public safety-based organization.



We've heard from some organizations that consider themselves to be fire department-based in terms of where they're located or their organizational history or culture. But in practice, their ground ambulance organization and operation is completely separate in terms of operations and finances.

For this reason, question 9 is a follow up question for those who answered A or B to question 8. Question 9 asks you to confirm whether your ground ambulance operation shares operational costs, such as building space, labor cost, vehicle, and facilities cost with other public safety operations. We expect most public safety organizations will answer yes to this question.

On slide 7, question 10 asks you to report whether there are any additional operations that you share costs with beyond what you already reported in earlier questions. If you selected fire department-based in question 8, you wouldn't see fire department appear again here. But you would have an opportunity to apply any additional non-ground ambulance operations that you share cost with.

Question 10 is a little different than question 8, where we're asking about how you would describe your organization. For example, in question 8, an organization might describe itself as a government standalone EMS agency but still happen to share facility space for the government fire department. You can report whether this scenario applies to your organization in question 10. Together, your answers to section 2 questions 8 through 10 will determine whether you see questions and instructions specific to public safety-based organizations later in the instrument.

## Section 5 — Ground Ambulance Service Volume

On slide 8, we discussed section 5, which will ask several questions about service volume. These questions will ask for your organization's total responses, which are the number of responses by your organization for any reason regardless of whether a ground ambulance was deployed. Responses to police or fire calls for a service, for example, would be included in this number.

The next questions in the section ask about ground ambulance responses, ground ambulance transports and paid ground ambulance transports. The questions about ground ambulance transports and responses will be answered the same for public safety-based organizations and for nonpublic safety-based organizations.

Moving onto slide 9, we give an example of how hypothetical fire department-based organization might report responses in section 5. Please keep in mind that these examples and all of the examples we'll walk through today are for illustrative purposes only and do not reflect information from any actual ground ambulance organization.

Section 5 question 1 asks for your organization's total responses including responses with and without a ground ambulance. This hypothetical organization has 300 responses where only a fire truck was deployed, 350 responses where both an ambulance and fire truck were deployed and 350 responses where just an ambulance was deployed.

For public safety-based organizations, this is one important place in the instrument where you'll count all of your responses, not just ground ambulance responses. The organization would report a total of 1,000 responses, which includes the 300 responses where only a fire truck was deployed.



Keep in mind that if more than one vehicle is sent to the scene or vehicles of different types are sent to the scene, it still counts as only one response. In the case for our fire truck and ambulance responded, that's still one response.

Beyond question one, reporting in section 5 is similar for organizations that are and are not public safety-based. In the second part, we look at ground ambulance responses where we count only responses by a fully equipped and staffed ground ambulance. You can see that the organization did not count the fire truck only responses here. But they did count all the responses where a ground ambulance responded alone or in combination with a fire truck.

For all of the organizations – of all of the organization's ground ambulance responses, not all will result in a transport. The third and fourth bars report the number of ground ambulance transports, 400 for this organization, and ground ambulance responses that did not result in transport, 300 in this case.

For most organizations, these two numbers will roughly add up to the total number of ground ambulance responses. So, in this case, 400 plus 300 is 700.

The final column reports the number of paid ground ambulance transports, which for this organization was 350 of the 400 total transports. I'll now pass the presentation over to Dr. Sara Heins to continue with section 7 of the instrument.

## Section 7 — Labor Costs

Dr. Sara Heins: Thank you, Andrew. Slide 10 gives an overview of section 7, which asks about your organization's staffing and labor costs related to your ground ambulance services. You will need to collect and report on the different items listed here by labor category for individuals with any ground ambulance responsibilities.

So, anyone related solely to the public safety aspects of your organization would not be counted in this section. But anyone with both ground ambulance and public safety responsibility should be counted in this section.

Moving onto slide 11, we will only go over aspects of staffing and labor cost specific to public safety organizations here. For a broader overview of the labor sections here at labor-specific presentation at CMS's Ambulances Service website.

In general, reporting, staffing, and labor cost information is similar for organizations that are and are not public safety-based. The main difference is that organizations that are public safety-based must report staffing and labor costs separately for staff that have public safety responsibilities and do not have public safety responsibilities. We will give the examples of how to make this determination in later slides.

Slide 12 gives an overview of staff categories. For each staff category, you will report whether you had any staff in 4 categories, paid staff with or without a public safety role and volunteer staff with or without a public safety role.



You may select multiple options for each staff category. So, for example, if you had paid firefighter EMT-Basic and volunteer firefighter EMT-Basic, in the EMT-Basic row, you would check both paid staff with public safety role and volunteer staff with public safety role.

As another example, if you have some paid EMT-Basics that are not firefighters and some paid EMT-Basics who are firefighters, in the EMT-Basic row, you would check both paid staff without public safety role and paid staff with public safety role. Individuals with no ground ambulance responsibilities, for example, a firefighter that does not have ground ambulance responsibilities, should not contribute to your responses in sections 7.

On slide 13, we give an example of how a fire department-based organization, which would decide which staff have public safety roles. So, the first example here is the trickiest. In this case, the volunteer EMT-Basic only responds to ground ambulance calls, never fire or other public safety types of calls. However, the EMT assists with administrative duties for the entire organization, which includes fire operations.

You may recall from our earlier presentation on labor that for staff with both EMT response duties and administrative duties, the EMT response duties take precedence for categorization. Therefore, whether you choose the with or without public safety role depends just on the nature of the staff member's EMT response duties. And so, in this case, you'd select volunteer staff without public safety role.

The next two examples are more straightforward. A paid EMT-Intermediate and a paid Medical Director who only have ground ambulance responsibilities would be classified as paid employees without public safety roles. The next example is a paid administrative staff that works with all aspects of the organization. Unlike the previous volunteer EMT-Basic example, you would choose the relevant with public safety role option because their main job, administrative work, involves both ground ambulance and public safety activities.

The next example of a firefighter paramedic who responds to both fires and ground ambulance calls is also straightforward. The staff member would be classified as a paramedic with public safety role.

And finally, paid full time firefighters with no ground ambulance responsibilities again should not contribute to the information you report in section 7.

Slide 14 gives an overview of section 7.1 through 7.3. Briefly, in the sections, you will be asked to report on paid EMT response staff, paid administrative facility staff and volunteer staff. For each staff category, you'll be asked to report total annual compensation for the paid staff categories, total hours worked annually, and hours worked unrelated to ground ambulance or public safety duties. So total hours worked annually includes hours worked on all activities at your organization, including ground ambulance activities, public safety activities and other activities with just a few exceptions.

Separately, you'll report hours works unrelated to both ground ambulance and public safety activities. These hours might reflect work related to air ambulance, healthcare delivery unrelated to ground ambulance or community outreach.

So, know that for a staff with public safety roles, you'll never have to break out time works on ground ambulance versus public safety activities. For a full list of activities covered in total hours and total hours



worked annually unrelated to ground ambulance or public safety roles, see the section 10.1 instructions in the instrument.

Slide 15 gives examples of how a hypothetical fire department-based organization might respond to question 1 in section 7.1. In this section, we just consider paid EMT or response staff. The organization has two paid full-time Intermediate-level EMTs without a public safety role. Both worked 2,080 hours during their reporting period. And each have annual salary and benefits totaling \$35,000 a year.

These staff primarily responded to ground ambulance calls for service. They each spend about 40 hours a year doing public health or community outreach activities. For these staff, the organization reports \$70,000 in total annual compensation, which is \$35,000 times 2, — 4,160 total hours worked, which is 2,080 times 2 and 80 hours worked unrelated to ground ambulance or public safety duties, which is the 40 hours of public health or community outreach times 2.

This fire department-based organization also has paid paramedic firefighter listed as an EMT-Paramedic with public safety role. He receives total compensation of \$45,000 including salary and benefits and worked 2,080 hours during the year. And this employee spent all of his time either responding to ground ambulance or fire calls for service. Because there is no need to split out ground ambulance from public safety time or compensation for the section, both the \$45,000 in total compensation and the 2,080 hours worked are reported directly.

He has no duties that are unrelated to the organization's ground ambulance or public safety operations. So, zero is listed in that column.

## Section 8 — Facilities Costs

Now, on slide 16, we move on to facilities costs for your organization. As on other sections of the instruments, only include facilities that are fully or partially related to ground ambulance operations. These facilities might include buildings like dispatcher call centers, garages, or administrative offices.

On slide 17, we go over questions 2 to 3 in section 8.1. In question 2, you will list the name or function of each facility fully or partially related to ground ambulance operations. For example, a garage solely for police cars would not be listed here. But a garage that contains both fire trucks and ambulances would be listed here.

For each facility you listed in question 2, in question 3, you'll give the total square footage of the facility and the percentage of your facility square footage related to ground ambulance services. Report your best estimate of the share of facility associated with ground ambulance services.

This can be based on physical space if that's applicable. Or if it's not possible to separate based on physical space, another option is to give the proportion of your organization's total responses that are ground ambulance responses. We'll give examples of how to use each of these two strategies on the next slide.

Next, on slide 18, consider a fire department-based organization with two facilities, a garage and an administrative facility. For the garage, it's fairly easy to estimate the percentage of space related to ground



ambulance services. And ground ambulances occupy about 25 percent of the space in a building whereas fire trucks occupy about 75 percent of space in a building.

So, for this facility, the organization lists 25 percent of space as being attributable to ground ambulance services. For the organization second facility in administrative building, there is no clear way to say what percent of the space is used for ground ambulance related activities. Both firefighters and EMTs use the staff break room in the conference room. And the offices handle administration for both fire and ground ambulance operations.

In this case, the organization can allocate based on the percent of their responses that are ground ambulance related. So, if the organization had 100 responses and 70 were ground ambulance related, the organization could say that 70 percent of space of its administrative building was attributable to ground ambulance operations.

Depending on how your organization uses space and the information available to you, you may choose to use one of these methods or another method to report the share of the building that is related to or allocated to ground ambulance operations.

On slide 19, we discuss section 8.3 question 1. In this question, you must report facility cost and share of cost associated with ground ambulance operations for insurance, maintenance, utilities and taxes. Unlike previous questions where you reported separately for each facility, here, you'll report total cost for all facilities combined.

Similar to previous questions, you need to report your best estimate of the share of facility-related expenditures associated with ground ambulance services. If this is something that your organization tracks, you can use whatever methods your organization uses to separate out costs related to ground ambulances.

If this is not something that your organization tracks, you can use the responses from section 1 question 3 to estimate the percentage. We will give an example of how to do this on the next slide.

On slide 20, we give an example of how you could use your answers to section 8.1 question 3 to answer the questions in section 8.3. Here, we returned to the previous example of an organization with a garage and an administrative building. The organization first uses their previous answers to determine the total square footage of their facilities related to ground ambulance operations. They do this by multiplying the square footage of each facility by the percentage of the facility related to ground ambulance services and then adding those numbers together.

In this case, they calculated that 1,550 square feet of their facilities are related to ground ambulance services. Next, they calculate the total square footage of their facilities. They do this by adding 2,000 and 1,500 to get 3,500. Then they divide 1,550 by 3,500 to get 0.44 or 44 percent. Then in section 8.3, they can input 44 percent for the percentage of their facilities cost related to ground ambulance services for insurance or any of the categories that they do not track separately.



## Section 9 — Vehicle Costs

On slide 21, we turn to section 9. The goal for this section is to collect information on the cost associated with vehicles related to your ground ambulance service. This may include both ambulance and non-ambulance vehicles.

Section 9.1 asks for information on ground ambulance vehicles. The questions your organization will see in how you would answer them do not differ for public safety-based or other types of organizations. Section 9.2 asks for similar information but focuses on non-ground ambulance vehicles that respond to ground ambulance calls or support ground ambulance operations. These types of vehicles may include SUVs or trucks, QRVs, Flycars, supervisory vehicles, and have particular relevance to public safety-based organization fire trucks and police cars.

Note that you should only report vehicles that are related to your ground ambulance operation. So, if EMTs or firefighter EMTs sometimes arrive at the scene of a medical response on a fire truck, you could include that fire truck in your reporting. If your fire trucks are used solely to respond to fires, do not report them in these instruments.

Section 9.3 asks about total organization-wide costs for certain vehicle costs including fees, insurance, maintenance and fuel. Both section 9.2 and 9.3 present some nuances for public safety-based organizations that we will discuss in the next few slides.

On slide 22, we go into detail about the types of questions you will be asked about non-ground ambulance vehicles. Specifically, you will be asked to indicate if you own or lease any non-ambulance vehicles used for ground ambulance call for support, the number of ground vehicles owned and the number leased and the number of miles travelled by non-ambulance land vehicles for any reason.

Based on the number of vehicles you indicated you have; you will then be asked to report on a variety of questions for each vehicle. This includes that vehicle type, for instance, fire truck or supervisory vehicle. You will also confirm whether the vehicle was used to respond to ground ambulance calls or support ground ambulance operations.

Keep in mind that you should be answering yes for each vehicle. If a vehicle is not used to respond to ground ambulance calls or support ground ambulance operations, it should not be reported in the survey. You will also report whether the vehicle was donated, the annual depreciation expense, and the share of travelled miles related to ground ambulance services. On the next slide, we will provide an example of how to report these allocated miles for each vehicle.

On slide 23, we present a hypothetical fire-based organization that has three non-ground ambulance vehicles used to respond or support ground ambulance calls or operations. Again, note that this example as well as others we provide during the presentation are meant to be illustrative in nature only.

All three vehicles support a combination of ground ambulance and non-ground ambulance operations. We start with vehicle 1, a fire truck, as a majority of calls for this vehicle are fire calls or community-based standby events.



However, 15 percent of the calls are in response to emergency calls where a ground ambulance also responds. Vehicle 2 is the same situation. Finally, vehicle 3 is a Flycar that supports ground ambulance operations half or 50 percent of the time.

So, this approach is one way your organization may calculate allocated costs. If actual mileage associated with ground ambulance calls is something that your organization tracks, you could divide the actual mileage associated with ground ambulance calls by the vehicle's total mileage to get the share of traveled miles related to ground ambulance operations. Otherwise, you can provide an estimate based on percent of calls like the one presented in this example.

On slide 24, we cover the final set of questions for section 9. Section 9.3 asks about other costs for both ambulance and non-ambulance vehicles. Questions 1 through 3 ask about other costs such as registration fees, license fees and insurance costs associated with all vehicles used to respond to ambulance calls or support ground ambulance operations.

Questions 4 and 5 ask about total maintenance costs and total fuel cost respectively. You will be asked to provide an estimate of how your maintenance and fuel costs are broken down across different categories of vehicles such as ground ambulance vehicles, fire trucks, and other non-ground ambulance vehicles. I will now turn the presentation over to Dr. Christine Buttorff.

## **Section 10 — Section 10: Equipment, Consumable, and Supply Costs**

Dr. Christine Buttorff: Thanks, Sara. Section 10 asks you to report your organization cost for several categories of equipment, medications, and supplies, which are listed here on slide 25. In section 10, you will be asked to report the total cost for each category as well as the percent of those costs that were related to your ground ambulance operations.

In general, most public safety organizations will report 100 percent of medical related supplies and equipment as attributable to ground ambulance services because these items will be used in the context of ambulance services. An exception may be if your organization also operates air ambulances, for example.

As with other sections in this instrument, only include costs partially or fully related to ground ambulance operations. Items specifically related to public safety operations should not be included.

Slide 26 had some example items for each reporting category. Let's take medications, for example. In general, these are 100 percent related to ground ambulance operations. And the total costs for these items would be reported. There might be some exceptions if your police officers carry rescue medications for opioid overdoses, for example.

Non-medical supplies, such as office equipment, may be shared by other services such as fire or police. In these cases, report a portion of this cost as attributable to ground ambulance services. One possible allocation method might be to use the share of ground ambulance responses to total responses.

Slide 27 shows how an example organization reports costs for section 10. As a reminder, this example is for illustrative purposes only and does not reflect any benchmarks for reporting.



This organization is fire department-based for the ground ambulance operation share some costs with the fire crew. For capital, non-medical equipment and nonmedical supplies, the organization reports the total cost for the organization, and then the percentage that is attributable to ground ambulance services.

In the last column, we list the allocation method. In this case, the organization used the share of ground ambulance responses to total responses. The organization allocated half of the costs for uniforms to the EMT personnel and reported that this cost is 100 percent attributable to ground ambulance services.

Now, let's take a second look at how an organization might report uniform cost on slide 28. The ground data collection instrument does not require your organization to allocate shared costs in a specific way. Your allocation method just has to be defensible. And there are multiple ways of allocating shared cost.

This slide shows two examples of how this organization could have reported the uniform cost. We saw that on the previous slide, the organization spent \$300 on uniforms for EMTs and just reported the 300, which was 100 percent related to ground ambulance services. This method is listed in the top row.

The second row in this table shows an alternative way. The organization could have reported \$600 in total uniform cost with only 50 percent of these costs related to ground ambulance services. In both cases, the organization used the ratio of EMTs to total staff members as the allocation method.

Now, let's make this example a little more complicated in the third row. Now, let's say that this organization still has 20 staff members who respond to calls but 10 of them are EMT firefighters.

In this case, using the staff ratio method to allocate the uniform cost doesn't make of much sense. So, the organization might use the portion of responses that are ground ambulance related to allocate the cost for firefighter EMTs and report 100 percent of the costs for the EMTs without firefighter roles. You can see the calculation in the last cell on the table.

There are other ways your organization might choose to allocate uniforms in this case. The goal is to get as close as possible to the cost of your ground ambulance services.

## Section 11 — Other Costs

On slide 29, we move on to reporting for section 11 on other costs. This section allows you to report on contracted services and costs not reported anywhere else in the data collection instrument. Just like the previous section, your organization will report total costs for the services that are either partially or fully related to ground ambulance services and the share of those costs that are related to your ground ambulance operations.

The first question in the section on slide 30 asks you to report any contracted service cost that you did not previously report in the labor section or anywhere else in the data collection instrument. For each type of contracted service that your organization reports having, you'll be asked to enter the dollar amount spent on the service and the percentage of the cost attributable to ground ambulance services. Organizations will vary in the types of contracted services they have, if any.



Slide 31 shows how an example fire-based organization would report for section 11 question 1. This organization uses contracted services for billing, vehicle maintenance, dispatch, and IT support. For each service, the organization reports the total spent on the service and the percent attributable to ground ambulance.

Because their billing service is only applicable to their ground ambulance operations, they report 100 percent for these items. The organization is able to track vehicle maintenance cost separately for fire trucks and ambulances. Therefore, they only report the ground ambulance repair costs by the hundred percent. Since IT and dispatch are shared with the fire department and there is no easy way to divide of these costs, the organization reports the percent of these costs attributable to ground ambulance services based on the proportion of ground ambulance responses.

Now, slide 32 makes this example a little more complicated. Let's say the same organization is also contracting for facilities maintenance. They reported earlier in the instrument that about 25 percent of the garage and 70 percent of the administrative building square footage was related to ground ambulance services.

You can see the calculation in the gray box where this organization determines 1,550 feet are attributable to ground ambulance services, which equals about 44 percent of the total square footage. Therefore, this organization decides to report that 44 percent of the cost of facility maintenance is attributable to ground ambulance services.

Slide 33 begins a – begins a discussion of section 11 questions 3 and 4. The third question in section 11 asks whether your organization has a variety of other types of costs that haven't been reported elsewhere in the instrument. These other costs fall under the broad headings of medical or ambulance related expenses, other administrative expenses and fees, fines, and taxes.

For each type of costs your organization incurs, question four asks you to report the total cost and the percent of each cost that is attributable to ground ambulance services. Again, only report costs that are partially or fully related to ground ambulance operations.

Slide 34 shows an example response for section 11 question 4. This organization only had two additional costs not reported elsewhere, organizational dues and event costs. The organization paid \$30 in ambulance organization dues, which are 100 percent related to ground ambulance operations.

The organization paid \$4,000 in event costs. One of the events was totally related to ground ambulance services while the other event was only partially related. The organization allocates the full cost of the first event to the ground ambulance services and a portion of the cost of the second event using the proportion of responses that were ground ambulance responses.

Therefore, this organization reports that 81 percent of the event costs were attributable to ground ambulance services. You can see the calculation in the gray box.

Slide 35 shows a different example. This organization has two other costs, waste removal and toll fees. The biohazard waste removal only applies to the ground ambulance services. So, the total cost is reported with 100 percent of this cost attributable to ground ambulance services.



The cost for the toll fees is shared with the fire services. And organization reports that 50 percent of the toll costs are attributable to ground ambulance services. In this case, the organization used the share of the ground ambulance responses to total responses to allocate toll costs.

Section 11 is on total cost, which is reported the same way for all organizations. We did not discuss it here.

## Section 13 — Revenues

With slide 36, we now turn to section 13. This section asks your organization to report revenues. In general, ground ambulance revenues are reported similarly across organizations. However, some of the questions in this section do ask you to report the percentage of revenue attributable to ground ambulance services using the method of your choosing. So, we will address these questions in more detail.

On slide 37, we now discuss section 13 question 5. This question asks organizations to report revenue from a variety of sources such as contracts with other organizations, donations, or grants. Your organization will only have to report revenues for the categories that are applicable to your situation. For each revenue category that your organization has, you will be asked to report the total revenue and the percent attributable to ground ambulance services.

Slide 38 shows an example of revenue reporting. This organization reports four sources of revenue. The first is a 10,000-dollar grant for a pilot program, which is 100 percent related to ground ambulance services. The second revenue source is for four standby events. There were four ground ambulances and one fire truck deployed for a total of five vehicles across all events. The organization determined that since four out of five vehicles at these events were ground ambulances, the revenue from the events was 80 percent ground ambulance-related.

The organization also received a charitable donation, 20 percent of which was earmarked for ground ambulance operations. So, the organization reports that 20 percent of this revenue is attributable to the ground ambulance services.

Finally, the organization also has a contract with a nearby area to provide fire and ambulance services. About 50 percent of the responses to this area are for ground ambulance services. So, the organization reports that 50 percent of the revenue is attributable to ground ambulance services.

That brings our review of the instrument to a close. And I will turn the presentation back over to Andrew.

## Question & Answer Session

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Thanks, Christine. Before we begin the question and answer session, slide 39 has links for additional resources related to the Ground Ambulance Data Collection System and instrument. I also want to remind you that CMS will host a live online Q&A session in about two weeks.

Christine, Sara and I, your presenters from today, will be available to answer additional questions. Then details about this Q&A session will be emailed to all of the attendees at – of our prior calls shortly and will be posted on the CMS's Ambulances Services Center website. So, with that, we will open up Q&A.



Joanna Pahl: Thank you, Andrew. We'll now take your questions. As a reminder, this event is being recorded and transcribed. In an effort to get to as many questions as possible, each caller is limited to one question. To allow more participants the opportunity to ask questions, please send questions specific to your organization to the resource mailbox on slide 36 so we can do more research.

Preference will be given to general questions applicable to a larger audience. And we'll be mindful of the time spent on each question. All right, Dorothy, we are ready for our first caller.

Operator: To ask a question, press "star" followed by the number 1 on your touch-tone phone. To remove yourself from the queue, press the "pound" key. Remember to pick up your handset before asking your question to assure clarity. Once your line is opened, state your name and organization. Please note, your line will remain open during the time you were asking your question. So, anything you say, or any background noise, will be heard in the conference. If you have more than one question, press "star," 1 to get back into the queue. And we will address additional questions as time permits. Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster – please hold while we compile the Q&A roster.

Your first question comes from the line of Justin Shiflet. Justin, your line is open.

Christine Bosman: Thank you. This is actually Christine Bosman with Justin Shiflet, Frederick County, Virginia. Question regarding county-owned departments. We are owned by the county. But we have multiple departments. We're all separate departments with our separate budgets.

We are fire and rescue. Our dispatch center dispatches for fire, rescue, and police. They are also their own department with their own budget. Our IT owned – it's similar across the board. Frederick County Sheriff's office, own department, own budget.

Reporting the times that police and dispatch assist us, do we have to do all through labor and all that? Or am I just – how would you like us to go about that or is that a question we should submit?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Right. This is Andrew from RAND. This is a common scenario. There are many organizations that will be collecting and reporting information that are county-based or other municipal government-based organizations that have these multiple functions where some of the important core functions of ground ambulance are shared. So, in your case, dispatch is a good example of a – of an important cost that is relevant to your ground ambulance operation but also probably fire, rescue, and police, et cetera.

So, in this case, it's important to report for the costs associated with those other functions. If they weren't reported, your cost just in terms of ground ambulance operation, in terms of your budget narrowly for ground ambulance would look low compared to what it actually is. So, in that case, it's important – because you're a part of the same county government, it's important to reach out to those other parts of the county government and have some way of reflecting that cost in the instruments.

There're different ways to do this. And in many cases, though, will involve reaching out to staff outside of your ground ambulance operation to get a sense for what labor and facilities cost, say, around dispatch, what those costs are, and then coming up with some way, in the spirit of many of examples we walked through today, some way of carving out a share of those we're reporting.



So, one option would be for dispatch, you could look at the share of ground ambulance calls, medical calls that come in compared to total calls fielded and use that as a way to report pulling an overall. Then I heard 25 percent or 40 percent or 50 percent, whatever it is of the total calls fielded. That's one approach you could use to carve out a portion of those costs for the – for the purposes of reporting.

Christine Bosman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Eric Peterson.

Eric Peterson: Yes. I was just curious as to what, if we have a volunteer who is a firefighter only but still does respond on the engine to EMS calls. Do I count him as a part of my labor force?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: That's a good question. So, if the fire – if the firefighter who is going out on EMS responses, say, as a driver in some of their capacity but not as EMT, is that the scenario?

Eric Peterson: Correct. He's just a firefighter only. He did – he's not an EMT. But he still responds on a piece of fire apparatus to medical calls.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Yes. So, in that case, the – that the definitions in the survey are broader than just EMTs. It's EMT and other response staff. So, I'd encourage you to look at the instructions in section 7. There are other categories of responders that are not EMTs listed in section 7.1 and 7.2 that might be relevant to that staff.

Eric Peterson: All right.

Operator: As a reminder, if you would like to ask a question, please press "star" followed by the number 1 on your telephone keypad. Your next question comes from the line of Christina Davis.

Christina Davis: My question's already been answered.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Melissa Stifler. Melissa, your ...

Melissa Stifler: Yes. I needed to – sorry – I needed to ask about if we lease a portion of a building from a police department but don't share any employees or other costs, would that be considered a shared organization?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: I think in that case, I'd say no and – if you describe your organization as not being police-based, which it sounds like from your scenario you might – you may not.

Melissa Stifler: No.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: And if the only fight – if you'd – if you'd – you're not kind of sharing an organization or really operational cost, just making payment to the police department for leasing part of the building, I would say no. But you would report that amount you're paying to the – to the police department on the instrument in that – in the – in the facility section.



Melissa Stifler: Facilities leased. So anytime you're talking about shared cost, you're typically talking about sharing employees. Is that – is that fair to say?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: That I think that's a very common scenario. You'd have staff that would be on both ...

Melissa Stifler: Okay.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy:... say, ambulance and fire. But it could also be facilities. That is another common case. I think the difference there is it's – rather than an ambulance organization and, say, a fire department being part of the same organization that shares a building ...

Melissa Stifler: Yes.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: in your case, it's more of arm's length kind of business relationship we're talking about. And it does ...

Melissa Stifler: Okay

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy:... seems a little different than the common cases that we've heard about.

Melissa Stifler: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: As a reminder, in order to ask a question, please press "star" then the number 1 on your telephone keypad. That is "star," 1 to ask a question. Your next question comes from the line of Jim Holly.

Jim Holly: Yes, sir. We're a third service, a government-based third servicing – the owned service here in the state of Illinois. And the question I have for you, we share several services with the fire as well as police. But we have an audited budget where the city has already – basically did the math for us. Coming back, say, in that out of a quarter of a million dollar for dispatch services, your vague is \$75,000.

Would I report that taking my audited budget and put in \$75,000 at 100 percent? Or would I put the cost of \$250,000 for the dispatch and in turn our share being 25 percent or whatever the math comes up to be?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: It's a good question. And I think you have some latitude here in how you – how you'd proceed in terms of reporting. As Christine and Sara mentioned as we went through the presentation, the goal is to get to the – that amount that is associated with your ground ambulance operation. And so, if you already have an audited budget, they've got you there. And then you could just enter those amounts.

And you know I think in – as a separate question about how you describe your organization. So, thinking about section 2, there, you'd probably say you were government-based but not fire, police-based. And I think just making sure you're working through those questions in a way in section 2 that actually reflects how you describe your organization is important.

If you do have staff that have those – that have some crossover role, so then maybe not. That might be something you should think about in section 7.



But it sounds like for the most part, you'd be able to say you were standalone government and then report that amount that your auditor batch already gives you that's associated with ground ambulance.

Jim Holly: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: As a reminder, to ask a question, please press "star" then the number 1 on your telephone keypad. That is "star," 1 to ask a question. Your next question comes from the line of Judy Theng. Judy, your line is open. Your next question comes from the line of Milly Bishop.

Milly Bishop: Yes. This is Milly Bishop with Chesterfield, Virginia. I have a question. If we were fire-based government organization and ambulance also but we also have 4 rescue squads, volunteer rescue squads that bill and run with us, do those 4 rescue squads have to do their own cost reporting? Or because we bill for them and they're dispatched also through us, do we do all their cost reporting also as one?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: It's a good question. And it – and it comes down to whether or not you're billing under one or multiple NPIs, National Provider Identifiers.

The sampling – so CMS randomly selected a quarter of ground ambulance organizations to report in this first year of the Data Collection System. And that random selection was done on the basis of NPI. And so, if you are billing under a single NPI, then in that case ...

Milly Bishop: Yes.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: ... if you were selected, all of that would be in scope. If you go under separate NPIs, then only the portion associated with whatever NPI was sample would be reported.

Milly Bishop: Okay. Thank you.

Joanna Pahl: Dorothy, we have time for one final question.

Operator: Your final question comes from the line of Patty Heslin.

Patty Heslin: Yes. We're located in New Mexico. We're an ambulance, fire department. And all of our guys are EMTs. We do – they would rather be on a fire truck than an ambulance. But that's beside the point. But do – are we going to – how do I – how do I break out how much time they spend on a fire truck and how much time might they spend on ambulance? I mean there is no way – if I look in that salary ...

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Right. Yes. It's a good – I ...

Patty Heslin: ... there's no way.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Right. So good question. And thanks for your question, for all the questions today.

The instructions – and as Sara walked through it today, the – the instructions do not require you to break out the time or a compensation reported for staff to have both ground ambulance and fire or other public safety



roles. And so, in your case, if all of the EMT response staff are both firefighters and EMTs, you're – the only thing you'll have to report are their total hours worked and their total compensation. There'll be no need to do any kind of math to break that – to break that out.

Patty Heslin: Okay. So, all I would need to do is just the first section. I wouldn't have to worry about the rest of the sections.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: So, you'll still need to – you'll still need to report throughout the entire instrument in terms of reporting labor though.

Patty Heslin: Yes.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: And you would indicate that all of your staff are – for – in the EMT response categories, you'd indicate that all of them are EMTs with public safety roles. And you'd report their total hours worked and total compensation without the need to break it up.

Patty Heslin: Okay because I mean we have a dispatch department. We have a police department. Sometimes, the police departments responds with us. But I mean how – I'm going to have to get a budget from the dispatch to let – to put in this section.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: That's right. So, for the dispatch, dispatch might result in some labor costs, facilities costs and again omitting those where other ground ambulance organizations do pay those costs directly. Omitting those in your response would result in a, you mean, lower cost.

And so, it is important to, CMS recognizes that that will take some extra effort on your part and on others' parts in this similar scenario to reach out to other parts of your municipal government to figure out what those numbers are. But in the absence of those numbers, that the cost that you'd report would be too low.

Patty Heslin: Okay. Thank you.

## Additional Information

Joanna Pahl: Unfortunately, that is all the time we have for questions today. If we didn't get to your questions, see slide 39. We hope you'll take a few minutes to evaluate your experience. See slide 41 for more information.

An audio recording and transcript will be available in about two weeks at [go.cms.gov/mln-events](https://go.cms.gov/mln-events). Again, my name is Joanna Pahl. I'd like to thank our presenters and also thank you for participating in today's Medicare Learning Network Call for Public Safety Based Organizations on the Ground Ambulance Data Collection System. Have a great day, everyone.

Operator: Thank you for participating in today's conference call. You may now disconnect. Presenters, please hold.