


Title	Document Code No.
EMS Policy for ALS Service Outside King County	PHL 9-3-1-DP
Department/Issuing Agency	Effective Date.
Public Health – Seattle & King County	January 1, 2026
Approved 	DPH Director

1.0 SUBJECT TITLE: EMS Policy for ALS Service Outside King County

1.1 EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2026

1.2 TYPE OF ACTION: UPDATE

1.3 KEY WORDS: Automatic Aid Agreement, Cost Recovery, Service Contract, Service Threshold, Written Automatic Aid Agreement

2.0 PURPOSE:

Establish a policy regarding the provision of ALS services outside King County, including the formation of a service threshold for the purpose of cost recovery.

3.0 ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED:

Agencies providing Advanced Life Support (ALS) outside the City of Seattle but within King County and receive funding from the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy.

4.0 REFERENCES

4.1 RCW Chapter 18.73 - Emergency medical care and transportation services

4.2 RCW Chapter 84.52.069 - Emergency medical care and service levies

4.3 King County Code - Section 2.35A.030

4.4 EMS Levy Ordinance #19950 - Submission of EMS levy to voters

4.5 EMS Levy Ordinance #19949 - Medic One/EMS 2026-2031 Strategic Plan

4.6 Updated EMS Financial Plans - approved annually through King County budget process

4.7 PHL 9-1 (DPH DP) EMS System Policy

4.8 PHL 9-2 (DPH DP) EMS Financial Policy

5.0 DEFINITIONS:

5.1 “Advanced Life Support (ALS)” means invasive emergency medical services requiring advanced medical treatment skills as defined by chapter [18.71.200](#) RCW.

5.2 “Automatic Aid Agreement” means a predetermined agreement between EMS agencies to provide automatic assistance across jurisdictional boundaries.

5.3 “Cost Recovery” means the reasonable compensation for costs associated with the provision of ALS services.

5.4 “Service Threshold” means the level at which seeking reasonable and appropriate cost recovery will be activated.

5.5 “Written Automatic Aid Agreement” means a voluntary and binding agreement between two or more jurisdictional authorities that stipulates the terms for services rendered.

6.0 POLICIES:

6.1 The EMS Division advocates for the provision of automatic aid between King County and non-King County EMS agencies where appropriate, and encourages the implementation of written agreements describing automatic aid based on good faith and the principles of protecting lives.

6.2 While automatic aid provides mostly reciprocal services without compensation, it is possible for ALS services provided by a King County agency to a non-King County agency to become disproportionate. Should the automatic aid reach the established service threshold, affected King County and non-King County EMS agencies will work with the EMS Division to review options and establish terms for reasonable cost recovery.

6.3 Terms of cost recovery between the King County and non-King County EMS agencies will be documented in a written agreement. The EMS Financial Subcommittee and EMS Advisory Committee will review and make recommendations regarding the terms of the agreement.

6.4 ALS agencies in King County will report all reimbursements and expenses for reimbursable calls to the EMS Division on an annual basis.

6.5 The application of the service threshold policy will be reviewed regularly by the affected EMS agencies and the EMS Division to ensure the intent of reasonable cost recovery is achieved.

6.6 The EMS Division will utilize responses from both within and outside King County boundaries in any analysis for medic unit demand within King County.

7.0 PROCEDURES:

Action By: ALS Agencies

Action:

7.1 Ensure automatic aid agreements are in place with all non-King County EMS agencies for purposes of protecting lives.

7.2 Pursue reasonable cost recovery options should the provision of automatic aid exceed the identified service threshold. Reciprocal ALS response and other in-kind contributions may be considered.

7.2.1 Work with non-King County EMS agencies and the EMS Division to review options and establish terms for reasonable cost recovery.

7.2.2 Document terms of cost recovery between the King County and non-King County EMS agencies in a written agreement.

7.3 Report all reimbursements and expenses for reimbursable calls on an annual basis separate from the operational or equipment allocations in the ALS year-end report under the category marked “other” and outside the operational and equipment allocations.

Action: EMS Financial and EMS Advisory Committees

7.4 Review and make recommendations for all proposed terms for reasonable reimbursement.

Action By: EMS Division

Action:

7.5 Monitor the ALS service levels in collaboration with the affected EMS agencies on an annual basis to ensure the intent of reasonable cost recovery is achieved.

8.0 **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

8.1 ALS agencies will ensure automatic aid agreements are in place for all ALS services provided outside King County and establish reasonable cost recovery when service thresholds are exceeded.

8.2 ALS agencies will report all reimbursements and expenses for reimbursable calls.

8.3 EMS Financial and EMS Advisory Committees will review proposals and make recommendations regarding the terms for all cost recovery proposals related to ALS service outside King County.

8.4 The EMS Division will monitor ALS service levels in collaboration with affected EMS agencies to ensure the intent of reasonable cost recovery is achieved.

9.0 APPENDICES:

9.1 Annual Service Threshold Calculations

9.1.1 The Service Threshold number is equal to 5% of an approved King County ALS annual unit total workload or 100 responses, whichever is less.

9.1.2 The number of responses is calculated by combining automatic aid responses by all King County ALS units into the area outside King County.

9.1.3 Threshold Calculation Examples:

Example #1:

King County ALS Unit Total Workload = 1,200 responses

Threshold (5%) = 60 responses

Alternative Threshold = 100 responses

All King County ALS Unit responses into ABC Jurisdiction = 72

Conclusion: Threshold not met (72 < 100)

Example #2:

King County ALS Unit Total Workload = 2,200 responses

Threshold (5%) = 110 responses

Alternative Threshold = 100 responses

All King County ALS Unit responses into XYZ Jurisdiction = 115

Conclusion: Threshold met (115 > 100)