



**News Flash - Your Medicare Payments Could Be Reduced If The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Needs To Collect Overdue Taxes That You Owe** - The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, Section 1024, authorizes the IRS to reduce certain federal payments, including Medicare payments, to allow collection of overdue taxes. Should you owe such taxes and your payments are reduced, your remittance advice will reflect a provider level adjustment code (PLB) of "WU" in the PLB03-1 data field. For more information, please see MLN Matters Article #MM6125 available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/MM6125.pdf> on the CMS website.

MLN Matters Number: MM6206

Related Change Request (CR) #: 6206

Related CR Release Date: December 12, 2008

Effective Date: July 1, 2008

Related CR Transmittal #: R4140TN

Implementation Date: January 12, 2009

## **Improved Access to Ambulance Services Payment Rates for Effective Dates of Service July 1, 2008, through December 31, 2009**

### **Provider Types Affected**

Ambulance providers and suppliers submitting claims to Medicare contractors (carriers, Fiscal Intermediaries (FIs), and/or Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs)) for ambulance services provided to Medicare beneficiaries.

### **What You Need to Know**

CR 6206, from which this article is taken announces an increase in payment for ground ambulance transports. Effective July 1, 2008 through December 31, 2009, the ambulance fee schedule amounts for covered ground ambulance transports which originate in rural areas are increased by three (3) percent, and for covered ground ambulance transports which originate non-rural areas, they are increased by two (2) percent.

You should ensure that your billing staffs are aware of these ambulance fee schedule increases.

#### **Disclaimer**

This article was prepared as a service to the public and is not intended to grant rights or impose obligations. This article may contain references or links to statutes, regulations, or other policy materials. The information provided is only intended to be a general summary. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. We encourage readers to review the specific statutes, regulations and other interpretive materials for a full and accurate statement of their contents.

## Background

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Section 146(a) of Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPAA) amends Section 1834(1)(13) of the Social Security Act to provide an increase in payment for ground transports, effective for claims with dates of service on or after July 1, 2008, and before January 1, 2010. It increases the ambulance fee schedule amounts for:

- Covered ground ambulance transports which originate in a rural area by three (3) percent; and
- Covered ground ambulance transports which originate in a non-rural area by two (2) percent.

Until the new fee schedule files have been tested and implemented, your carrier, FI, MAC will hold all of your ground ambulance claims affected by these changes and release them for processing when the files are implemented.

They will also identify ambulance claims (with dates of service on or after July 1, 2008) that were not paid at the rates that CR 6206 provides; and (to the extent possible) automatically reprocess them within 30 days of the release date of CR 6206. In addition, they will adjust claims that cannot be automatically identified and adjusted, if you bring such claims to their attention. Finally, you should be aware that your carrier, FI, or MAC will follow their normal processes for transmitting the adjusted claims to supplemental insurers, where appropriate.

## Additional Information

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The official instruction, CR 6206, issued to your carrier, FI, or MAC is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Transmittals/downloads/R414OTN.pdf> on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website.

If you have any questions, please contact your carrier, FI, or MAC at their toll-free number, which may be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/CallCenterTollNumDirectory.zip> on the CMS website.

**News Flash** - It's seasonal flu time again! If you have Medicare patients who haven't yet received their flu shot, you can help them reduce their risk of contracting the seasonal flu and potential complications by recommending an annual influenza and a one-time pneumococcal vaccination. Medicare provides coverage of flu and pneumococcal vaccines and their administration. – And don't forget to immunize yourself and your staff. Protect yourself, your patients, and your family and friends. **Get Your Flu Shot – Not the Flu. Remember** - Influenza vaccine plus its administration are covered Part B benefits. Note that influenza vaccine is NOT a Part D covered drug. Health care professionals and their staff can learn more about Medicare's coverage of the influenza vaccine and other Medicare Part B covered vaccines and related provider education resources created by CMS, by reviewing Special Edition *MLN Matters* article SE0838, which is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0838.pdf> on the CMS website.

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