



# Ten Best Practices to Optimize EMS Workflow

Surefire Ways to Increase EMS Productivity and Revenue





“

Streamline dispatch, simplify patient care reporting, and improve EMS billing to maximize reimbursement.



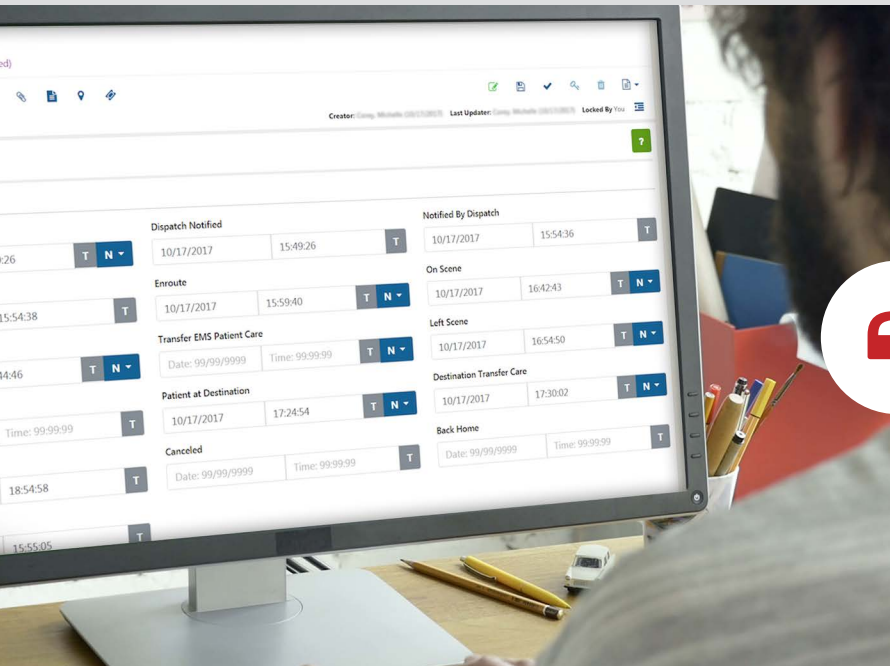


# Surefire Ways to Increase EMS Productivity and Revenue

EMS agencies continue to struggle to make ends meet. The cost of EMS patient care continues to rise, while ambulance reimbursement rates continue to disappoint. In addition, Federal and state regulations continue to multiply. When payers and regulators fail to see the immense value EMS brings to healthcare, economical solutions can be hard to find.

This eBook provides 10 Best Practices to Optimize EMS Workflow to help you revitalize your organization, increase efficiency, and improve revenue. It includes concrete actions that you can take to streamline dispatch, simplify patient care reporting, and improve EMS billing to maximize reimbursement.

## TOP 10 EMS BEST PRACTICES



Save time and reduce errors by capturing information at the source to eliminate duplicate data entry, including automatic transmission of EMS dispatch data to the crew's notification device and on to the ePCR.



## Ditch Manual Dispatch Data Entry

If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail. When applied to EMS workflow, this means that a successful ambulance transport begins long before your crew leaves the station. It begins at EMS dispatch because EMS dispatch sets the stage for the ePCRs and insurance claims that follow.

For many agencies, EMS dispatch invites chaos and inefficiency. They receive a phone call, write down some information, and send an ambulance. These manual processes cause many inefficiencies. EMS professionals must enter the same data multiple times. Data cannot be validated to prevent simple human error. All this leads to downstream mistakes in patient care reporting and billing.

Get rid of manual dispatch data processes by investing in an automated EMS dispatch system. Improve quality by standardizing processes based on call type, such as emergency, non-emergency, scheduled and unscheduled. Validate data at EMS dispatch for accuracy. For example, repeat patient calls can be validated against previous EMS dispatch records. Save time and reduce errors by capturing information at the source to eliminate duplicate data entry, including automatic transmission of EMS dispatch data to the crew's notification device and on to the ePCR.





# Keep EMS Dispatchers and Crews on the Same Page

Imagine your crew picks up a dialysis patient and asks the nurse for the Physician Certification Statement (PCS). The doctor hasn't signed it yet, so the crew decides to retrieve it later. Life happens, people forget, and the problem doesn't resurface until the billers have to deal with it. If they can't obtain the PCS, every resource and effort expended comes out of your wallet.

Strained communications between dispatchers, crews, and facilities cause ambulance delays that can paralyze your entire EMS response. They waste resources, sabotage patient care, and curb reimbursement.

Facilitate communications to keep dispatchers and crews on the same page by deploying an EMS dispatch system that supports internal communication between facilities and dispatchers. Automate document capture and ensure that important documents travel with EMS dispatch data to the ePCR and on to the claim. You'll receive supporting documentation faster and eliminate distractions from patient care.





## Leverage ePCRs to Improve Care, Compliance and Cash

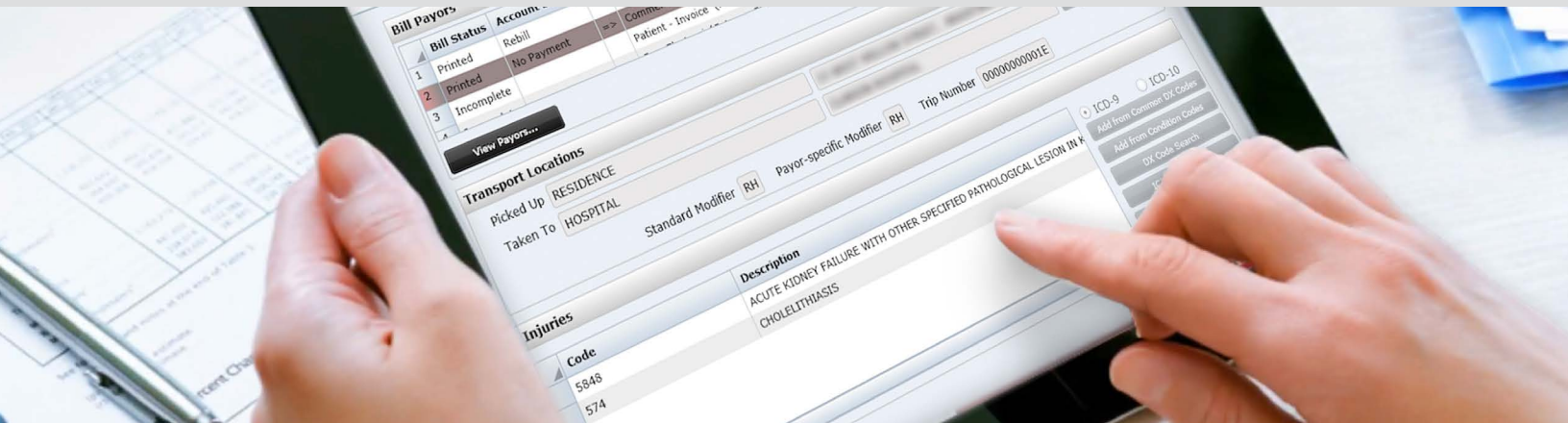
No one likes writing PCRs. At best they are time-consuming overhead, and at worst they get in the way of delivering efficient patient care. Unfortunately, it's the law. Moreover, PCRs protect you, protect your patients, protect your business, ensure quality of care, and enable improvement over time. Most importantly, they help you get paid.

PCR training is essential, but even the best trained EMS staff will not remember all the ins and outs of how their PCRs relate to Medicare reporting requirements, recent legal decisions and new compliance regulations. For example, the reporting requirements of a three-car pile-up will differ significantly from those of a drug overdose or a domestic violence call. And then there are the typos, misspellings, unknown acronyms and simple mistakes. In today's complex EMS environment, you simply can't produce quality PCRs with manual paper processes.

Invest in a quality ePCR software to eliminate needless mistakes and improve care, compliance and cash. Good ePCR software automatically validates mandatory fields based on call type and data comparisons against prior transport records. It can also be configured to reflect local EMS requirements. ePCR software should be easy to use and should guide crews to complete accurate and compliant reports. The superior documentation will greatly benefit your patients and your business by ensuring critical information doesn't fall through the cracks.







## Improve Agency and Individual Performance with Rigorous Quality Assurance

Fortify your EMS operations with a quality assurance (QA) review process that identifies procedural weaknesses in dispatch, patient care reporting, and billing. Your QA processes will produce a clear snapshot of your agency's strengths and weaknesses. Look at what you're doing well and do more of that. Look at what you're not doing well, find out why, and fix it. A smart QA review will eliminate payment delays, maximize your cash flow, and enhance your entire operation.



**If they can't obtain the PCS, every resource and effort expended comes out of your wallet.**

Define clear standards for data entry and review actual results against them to improve individual performance. Configure automated validations in your EMS dispatch and ePCR systems to improve quality through automation. Institute peer reviews of administered treatment to ensure adherence to local and agency-specific treatment protocols. If your U.S. state or territory requires submission of EMS data to the NEMSIS EMS database, explore ways to configure and use your ePCR software to guarantee compliance.

Before billers send claims, make sure they verify insurance information and charges. Conduct a billing-specific review that checks for accuracy and completeness according to the [Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#)'s requirements and [ICD-10 billing standards](#).



The relationship between crews and billers provides a litmus test of your agency's organizational health.



## Foster Collaboration Between EMS Crew Members and Billers

Billers often complain that crews forget documents and don't document correctly. In turn, crews complain that their priority is to save lives and billers don't understand how much they must multitask in the field. The relationship between crews and billers provides a litmus test of your agency's organizational health. If they aren't getting along and you haven't done anything to bring them closer together, then it's time to start. Correct the communicative weaknesses causing these issues to improve employee relations, productivity, and reimbursement time.

EMS billers depend on the crew to document thoroughly and correctly the first time. Otherwise, billers are waiting on addendums and amendments. At best this delays payment and at worst it might uncover that the transport wasn't medically necessary. Give your crew insight into what billers need. Provide ambulance billing tip guides and checklists like those by [Palmetto](#). Crew feels less overwhelmed by documentation when they know what's needed.

Define a multidisciplinary team to regularly discuss billing, collection, denial, and appeal metrics as part of continuous improvement efforts. Collaborate to integrate billing with dispatch and patient care reporting to improve accuracy and minimize payment loss. Consult with billers on the configuration of dispatch and ePCR systems. Back this up with regular QA processes to help optimize biller-crew interactions.







## Invest in Training and Tools for EMS Billers

You still haven't received payment from Jane Doe's last transport when the crew heads out to pick her up again. Reimbursement trickles in. Calls flood. This is the nature of EMS. You don't refuse a 911 transport because you haven't been paid for an earlier call. You save lives first and treat every run as an investment made on the assumption of future returns. Stressed by sluggish and unimpressive reimbursement, many EMS agencies struggle just to make ends meet.

With so many reimbursement issues beyond your control, it's essential to optimize the things you can control. Invest in your EMS billers and the returns are practically guaranteed. Inexperienced billers lack the confidence with coding tables needed to eliminate the errors that delay payment. They require training and tools beyond in-house orientation. Invest in formal training by nationally-recognized EMS leaders like [EMS Financial Services](#). Arm your billers with the most current reference materials. Your billers will learn to work more quickly and accurately, and time between transport and claim submission will shrink.

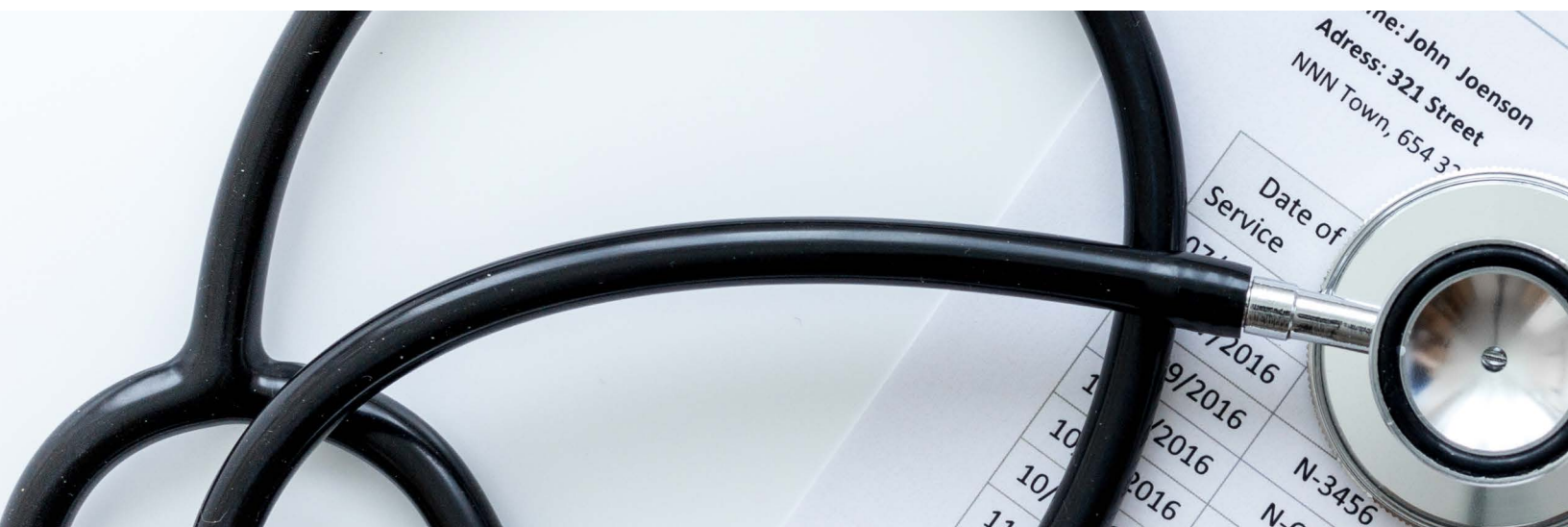




## Give EMS Billers Tools Designed Specifically for EMS Billing

Without the proper tools, EMS billers will spend their days correcting errors made during dispatch and patient care reporting, confirming compliance, and manually preparing claims for submission. Use your billers' time wisely. Direct their expert attention on what truly requires it, not on what a computer could do more quickly and accurately.

Billers should focus on work that requires a careful eye like attending to anomalies, not on repetitive tasks that can be otherwise automated. Free up time for billers with EMS billing software that automatically validates patient, payer, call, and compliance data. Choose software designed specifically for EMS billing, as generic billing software will not consider EMS billing specific data, such as Physician Certification Statements or location modifiers. Finally, provide tools that automate routine QA, such as automatically balancing accounts after completing all postings for the day, so you can trust the integrity of your collection and cash flow status.







## Plan for and Learn from EMS Denials, Rejections, and Appeals

Even with the best EMS processes, best EMS software and the best QA practices, you will still have to deal with some number of denials, rejections, and appeals. How you handle them matters, so take a proactive approach. Designate a specialist to troubleshoot internal appeals and to spearhead the development of strategies to avoid them in the future.



Isolate root causes and use this knowledge to improve your billing processes and to improve reimbursement rates.

Denial and appeal specialists should cultivate insurance company relationships to resolve issues quickly when they inevitably occur. They should also maintain historical records, so that detailed analysis can be conducted to discover recurring issues and remedies. Reports that display lists of denials, rejections, reasons for denial, and appeal success rate will reveal otherwise hidden trends. Isolate root causes and use this knowledge to improve your billing processes and to improve reimbursement rates.





# Optimize Accounts Receivable to Reduce Payment Loss

Every EMS transport uses resources, but not every transport yields payment. The longer an account goes without payment, the less likely payment becomes. Monitor, standardize and optimize your accounts receivable processing to reduce payment loss and improve cash flow.

Create reports of all outstanding receivables and track them daily, weekly and monthly. Organize accounts according to logical billing workflows, such as geography or insurer, and assign an EMS billing specialist to each group of accounts as a point person. Outline the entire EMS accounts receivable process and standardize all communications sent to payers. Create templates to save billers' time and ensure consistent, quality messaging. Your EMS billing software should prompt the appropriate point person when they should send a specific communication or take the next step.



**Every EMS transport uses resources, but not every transport yields payment.**

You can't forecast cash flow accurately without understanding the delays between billing and payment. Segment and analyze accounts to better understand causes of delay. Does payment vary by insurer? Does it vary by type of claim? Are there particular run characteristics that can alert you to delays, so you can get on top of them early? Develop benchmarks that enable you to forecast cash flow with increasing accuracy.







# Reduce Costs and Improve Quality with an Integrated EMS System

EMS care is a profession, but an EMS operation is a workflow. Dispatch is the first workstation, patient care is the second, and billing is the third. The performance of each downstream workstation depends on upstream performance. Poor communication, poor quality information, and mismatched hand-offs cause delays, waste resources, reduce quality and cost money. Your EMS operation is an integrated process. Your EMS system should support it with clean integration across all workstations.

An integrated EMS system initiates the EMS workflow with a single point of data entry at dispatch. Crews use prior patient look-up to auto-populate demographic and medical history fields, get accurate and complete information, and reach the scene more quickly. Data from important documents like the PCS should appear automatically in downstream documents like the ePCR for easy access and verification of medical necessity.

Integrated data across patient, call, care, claim and compliance can be easily assembled for accurate billing and rapid reimbursement. A complete, end-to-end audit trail is automatically maintained to ensure and demonstrate compliance with both internal and external standards. And, historical data that spans the entire EMS operation can be used for daily reporting, ongoing QA, and deep operational analysis to improve both clinical and financial outcomes. When your EMS operation is squeezed between revenue and costs, good information will be your ultimate guide to improved performance.





“

Integrated data across patient, call, care, claim and compliance can be easily assembled for accurate billing and rapid reimbursement.



## Let Us Help You Optimize Your EMS Workflow

Make your company more profitable and efficient now. The AIM Advantage can supercharge your EMS billing revenue, slash costs, tune staffing, and own compliance with AIM Online EMS Software and AIM EMS Billing Services. See for yourself how our EMS products and services work and how easy they are to use.

**(800) 726-4690**

**[www.aim-system.com/contact-us](http://www.aim-system.com/contact-us)**





**+EMS SOFTWARE & SERVICES**

[www.aim-system.com](http://www.aim-system.com)

If you like it, share it!

