



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Legislation to Control Statewide Attempts to Collect for Fire Runs**

**INDIANAPOLIS** – An amendment inserted into House Bill 1447 will require fire departments to comply with the Indiana Fire Marshal’s set fee schedule, which will lessen the amount of Hoosiers stuck with pricey bills for fire runs. Recently, Hoosiers have received bills ranging from a few thousand dollars to upwards of \$20,000 from Emergency Services Billing Corporation (ESBC), a company hired by fire departments to collect additional revenue.

Current Indiana law allows volunteer fire departments to charge fees for specified accidents and fire responses. In order to charge these fees, a volunteer fire department must comply with certain guidelines, such as publishing its fee schedule in a local news source, sending a bill within 30 days of the incident, and including a copy of the incident report with the charges. Most importantly, fire department charges must comply with the fee schedule that is published by the Indiana Fire Marshal.

However, many volunteer fire departments appear to be in violation of Indiana’s current law. Volunteer fire departments in Indiana are contracting with an outside vendor, Emergency Services Billing Corporation (ESBC), to collect for fire runs. ESBC touts that the payment for services is typically covered by the insured’s auto insurance policy, which many have found is untrue and are stuck with an expensive bill. Bills that were typically less than \$500 in the past are now in excess of \$5,000 and do not comply with the Fire Marshal’s fee schedule. Insurers have historically paid for volunteer fire department services, but coverage is typically limited to \$500. This leaves Hoosiers liable for the remainder of the bill. The insurance industry believes the charges are fraudulent and are defending their customers against attempts by ESBC to collect. However, those without insurance are left vulnerable.

In addition to excessive and unlawful charges, ESBC bills include hardball debt collection tactics indicating “any attempt to contact our client will be viewed as a circumvention of this relationship and may expose you/or your company to additional liability.”

“Unfortunately, this vendor (ESBC), representing volunteer fire departments, is abusing the statute and using bullying tactics in an attempt to collect on these excessive fees,” says Insurance Institute of Indiana President Steve Williams. “This bill (House Bill 1447) is designed to stop that and provide an important protection for Hoosiers.”

The Insurance Institute of Indiana is a non-profit trade association representing insurance companies in the state of Indiana. Its ultimate purpose is to create and maintain a business, legislative and public awareness climate in Indiana that promotes the continued success of the insurance segment in the free enterprise system. Visit us on the web at [www.insuranceinstitute.org](http://www.insuranceinstitute.org).

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