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## Best Practices in Emergency Services

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### On Promoting Customer Service

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By Mike Taigman

"She's not ready yet," said the nurse to Richmond Ambulance Authority paramedics Lori Harbour and Karl Dietz. They were at the hospital to transfer home an elderly woman with an excruciating form of cancer. After waiting 20 minutes, the nurse told Lori and Karl, "I'm sorry, she's still not ready to go. The pharmacy won't release her pain medications until she pays her co-pay."

Without missing a beat, Lori and Karl went to the ATM in the hospital lobby and withdrew \$100 from their personal bank accounts. They went to the pharmacy, paid the patient's co-pay, and took the medications to her room. Once they had her settled at home, the woman wrote the paramedics a check to cover the cost of the medication.

What would your crews have done when faced with a similar situation? My guess is that you know immediately which folks on your team would act the way Lori and Karl did. Chances are also good that you can think of a few folks who'd just say, "Call us back when you get it sorted out." What can you do as a leader to shift more people into the Lori/Karl camp?

I can tell you that wall posters, wallet cards, policies, protocols, standard operating procedures, employee of the month contests and preaching the gospel of customer service are unlikely to have any effect. My hope is that there's someone reading this who has a successful strategy that can help more customers get the kind of service that residents of Richmond, Virginia, enjoy from their EMS system.

I'll tell you what, send me your thoughts in an e-mail to [mtaigman@aol.com](mailto:mtaigman@aol.com) with the subject line Emergency Services Best Practices, and I'll weave your ideas into a future article. Who knows what we will come up with, but it should be fun, and we just might learn something!

More from Mike at [www.emsleader.com](http://www.emsleader.com).

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