Acadian Ambulance to raise its rates

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LAFAYETTE — Acadian Ambulance Service is raising its subscription rate by $3, according to company official Richard Zuschlag.

He said the 7 percent increase is the lowest in five years and well below the 12 percent increase in other health-care costs. The price increase goes into effect Sept. 1 with the firm's subscription drive, he said.

He said three reasons contributed to the need for a price hike from the present $42 to the new $45 rate.

First, he said, about $250,000 in federal and state grants which paid employees' training costs have been eliminated.

Second, the number of non-members using the service has dropped by 15 percent. Non-members traditionally have provided the company with a third of its revenue, he said.

And third, he said the company can no longer expect substantial increases in memberships, since the service has become saturated in most parishes.

The company has made several moves to cut costs by about $250,000, Zuschlag said. Some clerical and maintenance personnel have been laid off, and holiday pay also has been eliminated, he said.

The company's profit of 2.1 percent last year was the lowest in several years, he said.

The economic condition has caused the company to revise its thinking in other areas also, Zuschlag commented. "We do not foresee any expansion whatsoever this year."

Services might be dropped in Tangipahoa and Lafourche parishes, he said. Although the company is "fearing to continuing service" in Tangipahoa.

A decision on Acadian's future in both parishes should be forthcoming by June 1, Zuschlag said.

In Raceland in Lafourche Parish a hospital may not be able to provide the money for another year of service, he said, which would cause Acadian to withdraw there also.