

MARCH 2003 - VOLUME 1 - ISSUE 1

Los Angeles County Fire Fighters Local 1014 Medical Plan and Trust



Back row (left to right): Gerry Silva, Dave Gillotte, Mark Bartholomew, Joe Montoya
Front row (left to right): John Hoffman, Herb Schisler, Lou Buffone

“...I am writing...to express how pleased my family and I are with our Local 1014 Union Health Insurance. I personally would like to thank all of you for all the hard work you have put forth in providing our membership with health insurance that stands above the rest. I have had many types of health insurance...none of them compare to the excellent coverage and service our Local 1014 insurance provides. I am proud to be part of an organization that makes it a priority in providing its membership with an outstanding health care plan.”
—Mark B. Nelson: Battalion Chief, Station 28 in Whittier

Trust in Our Connection

1978. *Grease* was a box office smash. AT&T Bell Labs invented the cellular telephone. The Dallas Cowboys won Superbowl XII. Volkswagen halted production of the Beetle (until 1998), and 98% of all American households had a television.

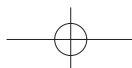
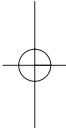
1978 was also a milestone year for Local 1014. To understand why, we need to go back to 1972 when the union received a rebate of about \$7,000 on health insurance premiums. The union’s Insurance Committee deposited this money into a trust fund, and the *Local 1014 Medical Plan and Trust* was born.

With U.S. health insurance costs on the rise, the Plan’s insurance carrier said it would increase premiums by 23%. The increase was *much* more than the Committee could justify and the carrier was not open to negotiating. So, in 1980, the Committee decided to self-insure the Plan.

Today, a Board of Trustees manages the Trust Fund. The Local 1014 President appoints each Trustee who volunteers his service and remains on the Board at the President’s discretion. Current Trustees are:

(continued on back page)

“We make sure that the Plan runs fairly and equitably for everyone. We make decisions as a group. There is no favoritism.”





Retiree Corner

It's No Secret...

According to research from Kaiser Foundation and Hewitt Associates, America's largest employers are eliminating or curtailing retiree medical programs, and asking retirees to pay a greater share of the skyrocketing health care costs.

Truth is...it *is* expensive for Local 1014 to offer medical coverage to our retired fire fighters. But, we mean it when we say *we take care of our own*. In fact, our Plan's benefits can be continued "as is" into retirement. The only requirement is that you participate in the Plan for five consecutive years immediately before you retire.

It's no secret that providing affordable, quality medical coverage is a challenge. So, we are asking all Local 1014 members to help keep costs down by:

- Practicing preventive health care (e.g., eat right, exercise, reduce stress, get regular check ups),
- Opting for generic prescriptions when possible (instead of high-priced brand names), and
- Using PPO or "network" providers.

If you have questions about your coverage, call 1-800-660-1014.

...our Plan's benefits can be continued "as is" into retirement.



Health Hints

5 Golden Rules for Great Health

1. **Get Outside.**

Take a walk on the beach or around the block. Whatever suits you. If you get out for at least 30 minutes a day, you will feel calmer and have a better perspective on life.

2. **Be Active.**

Whether you pedal a stationary bike or do yoga, add exercise every day to boost your mood, reduce stress, and help you maintain your weight.

3. **Sleep Like a Baby.**

To stay youthful and healthy, you need deep, restful sleep. Yet more than 65 percent of Americans suffer regularly from lack of sleep. According to the National Sleep Foundation, the right amount of sleep boosts your immunity, preserves muscle, and wards off illness. To improve your slumber:

- Eat your last meal three to four hours before bedtime
- Avoid alcohol
- Screen out unwanted glare with room-darkening shades
- Turn down the thermostat to a sleep-promoting 65 degrees
- Remove distractions
- Go to bed on time
- Breathe deeply

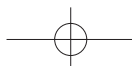
4. **Quiet the Mind.**

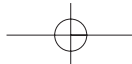
Health experts recommend clearing the mind or meditating for at least 10 minutes a day to beat stress.

5. **Take a Daily Multivitamin.**

Last year, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a Harvard study on supplements that concluded that taking a multivitamin might help you ward off diseases like cancer and osteoporosis. But, do your homework! Pick a multivitamin that gives you at least 100 percent of the federally established daily value (DV) for Vitamins A, B6, B12, C, D, E, and folic acid.

—Source: *Natural Health*, March 2003





Rx Talk

What's Up With Prescription Drug Costs?

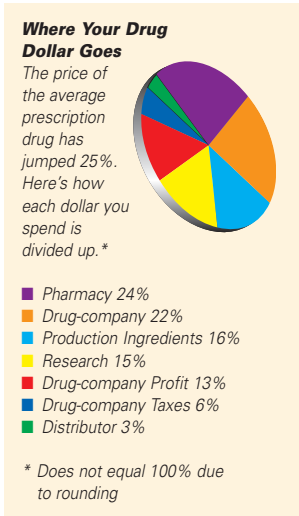
According to BlueCross BlueShield, prescription drug costs have quadrupled in this country since 1991, and are continuing to increase at a rate of about 25% per year. Reasons for the increases include an aging population, the research and development of new drugs, direct marketing via TV and magazines, and easier access to expensive outpatient drug therapies. Ultimately, this affects everyone, including Local 1014 Medical Plan members.

If you are covered under the Plan, you are also covered for pharmacy benefits. These benefits cost the Plan more than \$4.5 million last year, representing an increase of 24% over 2001. Close to the national average. The reasons for the increase are similar to the reasons described above *plus* more of you took advantage of the Plan's pharmacy benefits than ever before, and many of you are using highly advertised costly medications.

While some plans help control costs through formularies or preferred drug lists (list of medications required for use because of their cost effectiveness), our Plan does not impose these restrictions. To help ensure that the Plan can continue offering generous pharmacy benefits, we need to become wiser consumers. Here are some tips:

- Stretch your copay dollars and ask your doctor for generic medications.
- Beware of advertising that promotes a specific brand of medication. Be sure to ask your doctor about alternatives. Something might work as well, and cost less.
- The Plan uses CCN's PPO Network. Is your doctor a PPO provider? If not, watch out! Non-PPO providers may bill you for the difference between what the Plan pays for office visits/injections and the provider's billing rates.

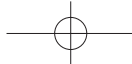
If you have questions about your pharmacy benefits, please e-mail Craig Stern, R.Ph., Pharm.D., M.B.A. at lacff@propharmaconsultants.com. Craig is President of Pro Pharma and Local 1014's pharmacy consultant.

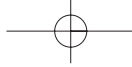


10 Great Reasons to Sign Up for Coverage

1. We have not raised medical copays in years.
2. You are family, not a number. We sincerely want to help.
3. Our Plan is staffed by caring, competent professionals.
4. Our Plan is a not-for-profit entity.
5. No one (except the government) tells us how to run our Plan.
6. You may go to any licensed physician anywhere in the world (if they practice medicine per American Medical Association standards), and be covered. Really.
7. You may continue the same medical coverage when you retire.
8. Most PPO providers do the paperwork for you.
9. When you compare our Plan to plans offered by the County of Los Angeles, you will see that we have the lowest deductible of any non-HMO plans.
10. When you use a PPO provider, your out-of-pocket maximum (after deductible) is only \$600 a year. This means you spend less. The County of Los Angeles' plans have out-of-pocket maximums that can run into the *thousands* of dollars...meaning you would spend much more!

You may go to any licensed physician anywhere in the world (if they practice medicine per American Medical Association standards), and be covered. Really.





Local 1014 Editorial Advisory Committee

Board of Trustees
Lynetta Lee
Carol Moore
Carole Vasse

Editor

Capstone Communications, Inc.

Design

Loren Myers + Associates

Contributing Editor (Rx Talk)

Pro Pharma Pharmaceutical Consultants, Inc.

Printer

Seaside Printing

Publisher

The Local 1014 Medical Plan and Trust publishes *Connection* quarterly for Local 1014 members. *Connection* is not a summary plan description, official Plan document, or contract of Local 1014 membership.

Contact Information

3460 Fletcher Ave.,
El Monte, CA 91731
(800) 660-1014
e-mail: medicalplan@local1014.org
www.local1014.org

4

(continued from front page)

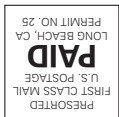
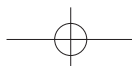
- Mark Bartholomew—Captain, Station 147 in Lynwood
- Lou Buffone—Retired Captain, Station 4 in Rosemead
- Dave Gillotte—President, Local 1014; Fire Fighter Specialist, Station 54 in South Gate
- John Hoffman—Chair; Retired Fire Fighter Specialist, Station 79 in Pear Blossom
- Joe Montoya—Captain, Station 125 in Calabasas
- Herb Schisler—Retired Captain, Station 44 in Duarte
- Gerry Silva—Treasurer, Local 1014; Fire Fighter/Paramedic, Station 18 in Lennox

These men give up their personal time twice a month to meet and discuss Plan operations, determine medical claims, and make administrative decisions. They also supervise the hiring of outside consultants who provide professional advice regarding the Plan.

According to Trustee Lou Buffone, "We make sure that the Plan runs fairly and equitably for everyone. We make decisions as a group. There is no favoritism."

John Hoffman, Chair of the Board of Trustees adds, "The Plan is in good hands. We are fire fighters first, but family, too. Everyone in this organization is important so we do our homework and try to stay as informed as possible. We really do try to take care of our own."

To provide equitable treatment to all Local 1014 members and their families, the Trustees cannot accept phone calls or e-mail regarding individual claims. If you have a general Plan question, call Carole Vassy at 1-800-660-1014. If you have a patient-related health care question, call Carole Moore, Patient Care Coordinator at 1-800-322-1014.



Local 1014 Medical Plan and Trust
3460 Fletcher Ave.
El Monte, CA 91731