



Oifig Stiúirthóir na Seirbhíse Náisiúnta Otharcharranna,
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Otharcharranna,
Áras na hAbhann,
Crosbhóthar Thamhlachta,
Tamhlacht,
Baile Áth Cliath D24 XNP2.
Fón 01 4631624/6.
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Mr. Richard Bruton TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

23rd September 2021.

Re: PQ 42369/21

To ask the Minister for Health the average cost to the health service of an emergency ambulance response to a 999 call; and the average cost to the health service of an emergency ambulance to a 999 call with regard to each advanced medical priority dispatch system category in 2019 and 2020.

Dear Deputy Bruton,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The variability in the cost of 999 calls is such that the averaging of costs would not accurately reflect the justifiable variation in costs associated with responding to the needs of the population across the diversity of the State. For example, the cost of responding to a heart attack in North County Dublin is likely to involve a single emergency ambulance which will treat and transport the patient to a PCI Centre in Dublin. Conversely, the cost of responding to a heart attack in Killybegs or Waterville is likely to involve a First Responder or Rapid Response Vehicle, an emergency ambulance travelling considerable distance to respond and an EAS mission to fly the patient from Donegal to a PCI Centre in Galway or from the Iveragh Peninsula to a PCI Centre in Cork. In the latter two cases, both patients may also have to be repatriated back to a local hospital for completion of treatment while the Dublin patient may be discharged home following a full package of care in a single large hospital. In this regard, NAS does not hold the information requested.

NAS does analyse the cost of providing emergency ambulance hours and in this regard, we can confirm that the cost of providing the staffing for one emergency ambulance on a 24/7 basis will be in the region of €900k per annum. However, the utilisation of those hours will vary significantly due to the nature of the area served by NAS. For example, a patient with an orthopaedic injury originating in South County Dublin may be transported to St. Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin 2 while a patient in Longford with the same injury will be transported to the Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore.



In this context, unit hour utilisation varies significantly depending on location, clinical condition and the regional impact of acute hospital reconfiguration, i.e. an ambulance in Dublin, Cork or Limerick might respond to ten (10) calls in a 12-hour shift while an ambulance on Carndonagh, Castletownbere or Mulranny might respond to three (3) calls in a 12-hour shift.

I hope this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Morton', with a stylized, cursive script.

Robert Morton
Director, National Ambulance Service