



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Oibríochtaí
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta
Bloc 4, Lárionad Gnó,
Tulach Mhór,
Co. Uíbh Fhailí, R35 FH59

Office of the Director of Operations
National Ambulance Service
Block 4, Central Business Park,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly R35 FH59

www.hse.ie
@hselive

t 057 9357696
e william.merriman@hse.ie

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1st July 2025

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 31964/25

To ask the Minister for Health the current and capital funding required for the purchase of an additional helicopter for the HSE helicopter emergency medical service. -Seán Ó Fearghaíl

Dear Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl

The Health Service Executive (HSE) National Ambulance Service (NAS) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above parliamentary question which you submitted to the Minister for response.

The HSE does not currently own or directly operate any helicopters. Current helicopters dedicated to the use of NAS are operated by:

- Athlone – aircraft owned and operated by the Irish Air Corps (funded directly through Defence Vote)
- Rathcool - aircraft owned and operated by a company on a contract basis established through a public procurement process

Several factors are considered when deciding on an air or road-based response for the retrieval and management of the critically ill patient. These include demographic spread, geography (including limitations of rural road networks), a dispersed rural population particularly on the western seaboard, weather, and reduced daylight during the winter months.

The establishment of trauma care networks, the centralisation of care for time-critical conditions such as heart attack and stroke, and acute hospital and emergency department reconfiguration are some of the developments that will drive the need to enhance the current level of aeromedical service provision in Ireland and thus define the parameters of cost.

I hope you find this information helpful

Yours sincerely

William Merriman
Director of Operations
National Ambulance Service

