



**Oifig anStiúrthóir  
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta,**  
Foirgneamh Aibhneacha, Crosbhóthar  
Thamhlachta, Tamhlacht,  
Baile Átha Cliath D24 XNP2

**Office of the Director  
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Ref: WM/ PQ24148/25

27<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Deputy David Cullinane  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

PQ 24148/25

**To ask the Minister for Health her plans to ensure safe staffing in the helicopter emergency medical service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane**

Dear Deputy Cullinane

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.

The National Ambulance Service provides two dedicated HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) responses in Ireland. The Emergency Aeromedical Service is provided in conjunction with the Irish Air Corps, is based at Custume Barracks, Athlone and is staffed by Air Corps flight crews and NAS Specialist Paramedics HEMS (Air Corps 112).

The NAS also provides a dedicated Helicopter Emergency Service using a commercial aviation provider, which operates from a base at Rathcool Aerodrome in North Cork and is staffed with NAS Specialist Paramedics HEMS (Aeromed 01).

The Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) also provides additional HEMS support using their SAR Helicopters based at Shannon, Dublin, Sligo and Waterford on an “as available” basis. All aircraft are tasked through the 999/112 system by a specialist aeromedical desk in the NAS National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) as part of the national emergency response framework.

HEMS in Ireland is subject to robust governance, performance and regulatory oversight requirements. Governance and performance oversight of HEMS is provided through the HSE by the Clinical Director for the clinical care and Director of Operations for operational matters, on behalf of the NAS.

Since the time of the Government decision to establish a HEMS in Athlone, the established crewing model has been an Advanced/Specialist Paramedic and an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). This model remains consistent with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) Minimum Crewing Model for Emergency Ambulances.





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There has never been a change from the above-established crewing model to one which permanently requires dual HEMS paramedic crewing. Any alteration to this model has been temporary, done to facilitate Specialist Paramedic training and while the NAS recruits and renews our EMT staffing cohort.

Please also note that both helicopter assets continue to operate normally.

The NAS can also give assurance that there are no plans and there have never been any plans to reduce HEMS in Ireland. On the contrary, the HSE National Service Plan for 2025 makes provision for an expansion of HEMS from two locations to three locations in 2025.

In addition to the above, in September 2024, the HSE commenced a Feasibility Study to examine the need for Physician delivered HEMS in Ireland. The preliminary results of the trial have not supported any change to the HEMS crewing model, hence the trial period has been extended into 2025.

Yours sincerely

William Merriman  
Director of Operations  
National Ambulance Service





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