



Media release



Ambulance service annual performance results announced

19 April 2011

Despite seeing just under 11,000 more patients within 8 minutes this year, East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) has not met the national annual performance targets of reaching 75% of Category A (life threatening) 999 calls in 8 minutes and 95% of Category B (serious but not immediately life threatening) calls in 19 minutes, the ambulance service has announced today.

The Trust has recorded figures of 72.4% for Category A and 88.3% for Category B for 2010/11. Last year's figures for the Trust were 74.9% and 95.3% respectively, after national adjustments were made to recognise the harsh winter we experienced.

This year EMAS hit the 75% target for Category A 999 calls at 8 minutes 41 seconds.

"We have provided a tremendous amount of care to patients this year, often in very difficult circumstances, but there is no getting away from the fact that these are deeply disappointing results for us and for our patients," said David Farrelly, Deputy Chief Executive of EMAS. "We were hitting the target until the severe snow and ice hit us in the last week of November. The prolonged cold spell brought a dramatic increase in patients with breathing problems and flu-like symptoms through December and into January. Unfortunately we were not able to regain our focus through February and March to make up for lost ground.

"We are determined to get it right for patients though, and we have invited input from colleagues in other ambulance trusts to advise on how we can regain our former status of only three years ago when EMAS was one of the country's top performing ambulance trusts."

This year the Trust has seen demand grow dramatically for 999 calls relating to life threatening situations ('Category A' calls). In 2009/10 we responded to 186,643 such calls and this rose to 205,248 in 2010/11 – an increase of 10%.

Serious but not immediately life threatening calls ('Category B') were 246,947 last year and 247,113 this year, so by contrast were virtually static. Our performance against target fell this year as we prioritised responses to those calls relating to life-threatening situations such as stroke and cardiac arrest.

The Trust registered success in other important areas of its activity over the year, notably in patient safety, treating patients with dignity and the safeguarding of vulnerable people.

We also reduced the age of our fleet with a £9m investment in 91 new ambulances, with more to come this year, and we have just introduced new staffing rotas that match staff availability to current levels of 999 demand so that we can be more responsive.

"Trust surveys of patients who have used our 999 services over the past year show that 95% of people were satisfied or very satisfied with the service we provided to them and 95% of patients felt that we exceeded their expectations," said David Farrelly. "However, we also know from talking to patients that a speedy ambulance response time is highly prized, and so we will be making every effort over the coming 12 months to achieve the national performance targets once more."

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Notes

1. These performance figures for 2010/11 require external validation – a national process which is applied to all ambulance trusts and makes possible the compilation of a national performance table. Validation is usually completed in August each year. EMAS is publishing the figures at this time because we have fallen short of the annual target and wish to be transparent.
2. No decision has been taken yet about applying for an exemption for those days when the exceptional snow and ice affected services in November and December. Last year the Care Quality Commission agreed such an arrangement and our corrected annual performance was recorded at 74.9% for Category A. If we do apply for an exemption and it is granted, the figures we have published today will change accordingly.
3. 2010/11 was the final year for recording of Category B responses – a new nationally-introduced approach focuses on recording outcomes (what we actually do for patients on arrival) rather than simply response time (which is about speed of arrival). We issued a press release on the Category B changes on 30 March 2011 – please see the news section of our website if you would like to know more about this change.
4. East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EMAS) provides emergency 999, urgent care and patient transport services for the 4.8 million people within Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire (including North and North East Lincolnshire), Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire.
5. We employ over 3,500 staff at more than 70 locations, including two control rooms at Nottingham and Lincoln, with the largest staff group being our accident and emergency 999 crews. Our overall annual budget is £158 million.
6. We operate a fleet of around 850 vehicles, including emergency ambulances, patient transport vehicles and fast response cars.
7. Every day we receive around 2,000 calls from members of the public calling 999 - this is the equivalent of receiving a 999 call every 45 seconds of every day. Our accident and emergency crews respond to over 670,000 emergency calls every year.
8. Our Patient Transport Service (PTS) and volunteer ambulance car drivers provide care and transport on over 5,000 journeys to and from routine health appointments each day.