

Community Air Ambulance service to begin next month

ICRR helicopter to do ‘fuel for life’ fundraising tour

Lives are to be saved – as Ireland’s first-ever Charity Air Ambulance service touched down at Kerry Airport today.

The Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) will enter full-time daylight hours service next month. Today it flew from Wales to Kerry Airport.

Irish Community Rapid Response (ICRR) – a charity dedicated to pre-hospital care – is running the service in co-operation with the HSE National Ambulance Service.

The Air Ambulance is expected to respond up to 500 calls per year, and bring the population of a 10,000 square mile area within 20 minutes of critical medical care.

It will be tasked through the National Ambulance Service 999 / 112 call system and is supported by the HSE and Department of Health.

The helicopter will be based in Cork county, but available for missions nationwide and coordinate with the existing Athlone based Emergency Aeromedical Service.

During the next month the ICRR Air Ambulance will be touring the communities it will service to help raise awareness and support fundraising. The service will cost €2million to run annually – and is to be funded through community and donor contributions.

ICRR CEO John Kearney said lives will be saved and families’ grief spared, and he called for strong public support in order to maintain and develop it.

“Since 2008, ICRR has developed a network of over 200 land based volunteer doctors throughout Ireland who deliver critical medical interventions which prevent serious injury or death. We have ten Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs) successfully in operation.

“We are now taking to the air and will mirror successful international models. The air service will include medical crew on board and rapid transport to a critical care facility.

“It is hoped that €2million can be raised per annum. The helicopter fuel costs €350 per hour, or roughly €5 per minute. For the next month we will be spreading the word about ICRR’s *Fuel For Life Campaign* and will be doing a tour of communities. We would greatly appreciate all the support we can get,” John Kearney said.

Wales, a country of similar size and population, has a well-established fleet of four community Air Ambulances which respond to approximately 2,000 incidents a year. Examples of incidents which the Air Ambulance is expected to respond to include:

- Retrieval & Transfer: The airlift of a seriously ill patient from remote and rural medical hubs or accident scenes to specialist hospital care.
- Trauma: Injuries sustained in road traffic accidents, equestrian, agricultural, industrial and sporting incidents, falls and impact injuries.

- Medical: Including cardiac medical events, strokes, anaphylaxis, etc.

Further information

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