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‘108’ emergency response service to expand ambulance fleet

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: The toll free ‘108’ emergency response service will expand its ambulance fleet to over 450 vehicles by year-end to reach out to more areas in the State.

Within about a year of its launch, the service operated by GVK Emergency Management and Research Institute (EMRI) on a Public-Private-Partnership model, has handled over 1 lakh medical emergencies through its fleet of 198 state-of-the-art ambulances.

With the fleet expansion, the service would reach out to places such as Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Namakkal, Villupuram, Sivaganga, Tuticorin and Karur.

“With the scaling up of services, we should be able to raise the number of emergency despatches from the current three cases per ambulance a day to at least eight errands,” S.Subramanian, COO, GVK EMRI told a press conference on Tuesday.

Among the medical emergencies handled by the team, accident-related calls accounted for the most (29 per cent). It is followed by pregnancy-related issues (28 per cent), abdominal pains (7 per cent) and cardiac complications (4 per cent).

While 77 per cent of the patients were admitted to Government hospitals, 13 per cent of the cases were taken to private hospitals and 10 per cent given first aid at their homes.

The service had been able to reach at least 6,300 critically ill patients to hospitals and helped save their lives, said D.Guruswamy, CEO, Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project.

“However, awareness about the service is still lacking among sections of society. Even among those who are aware, many do not know that it is a totally free service,” he said.

The 108 control room located in Chennai handles around 700 emergency despatches to locations across the State every day. The nearest stationed ambulance will reach caller’s doorstep within 12 minutes in cities and 17 minutes in rural areas. The service is manned by about 1700 specially trained personnel.

The 24-hour emergency line can also be used to report a crime or a fire.