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Boston eyes more money for EMS

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DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

Paramedic Miguel Diaz checked equipment at 109 Purchase St. in November. A proposed budget includes a funding increase to hire more personnel and replace some ambulances to improve response times.

By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF APRIL 29, 2016

Mayor Martin J. Walsh's [budget proposal](#) includes a multimillion-dollar funding increase to hire

additional emergency medical personnel and replace some ambulances in an effort to [improve subpar response times](#).

The plan calls for increasing the Emergency Medical Services Department's budget by 5.7 percent, or more than \$2.8 million, to \$52.9 million for fiscal 2017.

The extra funding would allow the agency to expand its staff of full-time emergency medical technicians by 20, which would bring its total uniformed staff to 371. The plan would also replace 10 aging ambulances in the city's fleet of about 50, city officials said.

"These investments will result in a number of tangible benefits, including reduced response times, fewer 911 emergency medical calls referred to private ambulance companies, lower overtime costs and expanded surge capacity during major city events," said Walsh's budget proposal.

The budget increase "will enable EMS to maintain their high standards for pre-hospital care," said a statement from Marjorie Nesin, spokeswoman for the Boston Public Health Commission, which oversees the EMS Department.



Boston EMS response times slow

The amount of time it takes for Boston EMTs to

get to the scene of a medical emergency has climbed in recent years despite efforts to keep it down.

In November, the Globe reported that the response time for Boston's emergency medical personnel to arrive at the scene of heart attacks, shootings, and other serious episodes had slowed in recent years, largely because of a [little-understood](#) surge in the number of calls for help.

Walsh's budget proposal acknowledged that over the past several years, "the data indicates the need for additional uniformed personnel."

The city said the funding increase for Boston EMS would be paid for largely through additional revenue from health insurance claims and by reducing employee overtime costs within the agency.

The staff expansion would allow the city of Boston to roll out 26 ambulances on a typical day, two more than what it deploys currently. (Other ambulances serve as reserves that can be put into service when maintenance is needed or activated during special events or extreme weather.)

Boston EMS would also use some additional funding to pay for negotiated employee wage increases set to kick in next year.


The city's capital budget for the coming fiscal year also includes a \$50,000 study of building an EMS training academy and \$100,000 to study building a new EMS station in the burgeoning Innovation District. There are currently 16 stations citywide.

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