



13 May 2025

Email:

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST**

**Request No:** 33897-24  
**Subject:** Blue light emergency driving  
**Date Received:** 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Thank you for your request for information received on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024 which was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Health and Social Care Trust has now completed its search for the information you requested and that is detailed below. The Trust would fully apologise for the delay in the provision of a response.

FOI QUESTION(S)	ANSWER(S)
1) Please can you provide me with your current policy for response (blue light) emergency driving?	Please refer to the attached document entitled 'Occupational Road Risk Fleet Safety Policy (final draft of v1.01) 1st July 2024'
2) Does the driver of the 999 ambulance make the decision to put the blue lights on, since it is them claiming the exemption or does the Trust tell a driver when to respond ? E.g. you must put your blue lights on for all Category 1, 2, 3, 4 and all HCP 1, 2 and 4 hour calls.	Using emergency warning devices is not in itself claiming an exemption from a road traffic / safety law. However, other aspects, such as exceeding speed limits, would be. Any exemptions from road safety / traffic law are the responsibility of the driver to take and justify. NIAS do not instruct our drivers to take or not take exemptions based solely on categorisation of call. Any emergency call could require exemptions to be taken in order to 'preserve life or limb'.
3) Your calls are currently graded as the following:  Cat 1 - 999 Immediately life threatening Cat 2 - 999 Emergency – potentially serious incidents Cat 3 - Urgent problem Cat 4 - Less urgent problem Cat 3, Cat 4 and HCP 1, 2 and 4 hour calls are currently classed as urgent/less urgent calls. If a call is an urgent (Cat 3, Cat 4 and all HCP calls) would you expect your staff to	Urgent, non-urgent or routine categories of calls would not normally be responded to under emergency conditions. However, this is again for the driver to decide based on the current road conditions and other information related to the patient's condition or incident details.



respond to these on blue lights or is it their decision to make as the driver based on the information they receive ?	
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I hope the above and attached fully assists you.

Please note that, under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations, if you wish to publish or otherwise use this information besides for your own means, you will need to seek our permission to do so.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Director of Planning, Performance and Corporate Services, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) HSC Trust, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the Trust has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

**Email:** [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)

**Website:** [ICO Website](#)

**Post:** Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF

**Telephone:** 028 9027 8757 or 0303 123 1114 (Belfast based Office)

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that NIAS replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <https://nias.hscni.net> Personal details in respect of your request will have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Yours sincerely

*(not signed – issued by email)*

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**Information Governance Team**