

Fat patients force British ambulances to supersize

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Britain is having to buy new ambulances and upgrade others to cope with a growing number of fat patients as an obesity crisis grips the country, a report said Thursday.

Every ambulance service in Britain has had to buy extra-strength wheelchairs and wider stretchers while reinforcing existing vehicles at a cost of millions of pounds (dollars, euros), the BBC said, citing official figures.

Several fleets have also have also had to buy specialist ambulances costing up to £90,000 (\$145,000, 105,285 euros) each, according to the figures, which the broadcaster obtained through a freedom of information request.

"The fact is patients are getting larger and larger and ambulances need to be able to respond immediately to what could be life-threatening situations," Jo Webber, director of Britain's Ambulance Service Network, told the BBC.

"Every service is having to invest money in this. It shows that some of the lifestyle changes we are seeing have a range of costs. It is not just about treating them, but the infrastructure costs as well."

One service, the South Central ambulance trust, has spent more than £1 million in the last three years to upgrade nearly two thirds of its 180-strong fleet, it was reported.

The modifications allow ambulances to carry patients weighing up to 144 kilograms (318 pounds).

Britain has the highest [obesity](#) level in Europe, with 24.5 percent of adults classed as obese, according to a study released in December by the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The EU average is 14 percent.

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