Poor PPE to blame for thousands of ambulance workers Covid-19 absences

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GMB, has blamed ‘second-rate’ PPE supplies as Covid-19 absences among ambulance workers hit at least 2,000 in the first week of November.

Figures obtained by the union show as of this week there were 2,077 covid-related absences across just six trusts, with an average covid absence rate of 7%.

If this rate is extrapolated across the eleven ambulance trusts in England and Wales then the number of ambulance workers who are sick or self-isolating could be as high as 3,740.

GMB is clear that poor PPE is to blame, and the union is calling on the Government and Public Health England to urgently review PPE guidance for our key workers.

Ambulance workers report having to attend patients with flimsy gowns instead of proper PPE, nurses in hospitals working amongst Covid-19 patients say they are given only the most basic of surgical masks, while hospital trusts are not isolating and testing patients efficiently.

Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer, said:

“Covid-related absence among ambulance staff is rocketing.

“And it’s no wonder when our paramedics, technicians and practitioners are expected to treat suspected coronavirus patients with nothing but a flimsy mask and a plastic apron. One gust of wind and this second-rate PPE blows away.

“GMB has called for guidance to be reviewed since the start of the pandemic.

“Our members are professionals working across the NHS and Ambulance Service, they make risk assessments every day and they should be trusted to determine the level of PPE they need in specific situations.

“Unless ministers and PHE act, quickly our ambulance service will grind to a halt.”

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Member requiring help?

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