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# Optimizing Ambulance Locations for Coverage Enhancement of Accident Sites in South Delhi

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#### **Abstract**

The main focus of this paper is to analyze the level of service of existing emergency medical services (EMS) operated by CATS in South Delhi. The fatal crash data for three years is plotted in ArcMap 10.3 and clustered to obtain demand sites. Travel time computation between ambulance location and accident clusters is done using Google Maps API. Also, change in efficiency of the system with optimization for a given number of ambulances using Double Standard model (DSM) is observed. The results indicate that the existing system can attain full coverage within 22 mins while it takes only 13 mins for the optimized system. The present system can achieve 97% double coverage with 29 ambulances within 20 mins, whereas the optimized system can completely cover all the accident sites with eight ambulances.

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Keywords: EMS; Ambulance Locations; Double Standard Model

#### 1. Introduction

Road traffic crashes are the 9th leading cause of injury globally, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016 (Collaborators, 2017). In India, 2.9% of the deaths in 2016 occurred due to road traffic injuries and is the 10th leading cause of death in 2016 (Indian Council of Medical Research Public Health Foundation of India and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2017). The percentage of deaths due to road traffic crashes in Delhi increased from 2.2% in 1990 to 3.1% in 2016. Evidence from developed countries indicates that 15-30% of deaths due to road crashes can be prevented by proper coordination of in-time rescue and retrieval systems together with in-hospital trauma

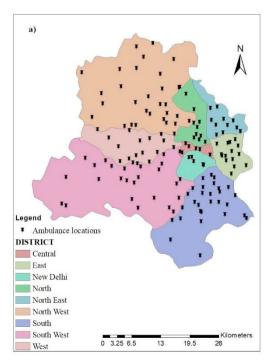
\* Shayesta Wajid. Tel.:+91-9773620179. *E-mail address*: shayestawajid@gmail.com management. In developing countries like India, 30% of emergency patients die before they reach a hospital. Over 80% of accident victims do not get access to medical care within one hour of the incident (Fitzgerald et al., 2006). Emergency medical services (EMS) are critical for improving the survivability of road traffic crash victims and for those in need of pre-hospital care.

There is a significant scope for applying operations research and statistical methodologies for developing decision support tools for optimizing strategic, tactical, and operational aspects of EMS to save as many lives as possible (Gendreau et al., 1997). Specifically, we focus on a case study in South Delhi and identify high fatality crash clusters based on fatality accident data from 2014-2016. We then identify potential sites for locating ambulances. A double coverage model is developed to assign existing ambulances to available ambulance locations.

#### 1.1. Overview of Study Area

Delhi is located in northern India and is home to the national capital, New Delhi. Delhi's population is over 16 million, and it is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world. Delhi region is divided into nine districts, as shown in Fig. 1a). The road network in Delhi is 32,663 km long, of which 360 km are National Highways.

Centralized Accident and Trauma Services (CATS) is a government authorized agency that has been operational in Delhi since 1991. CATS was initiated under the 6th five-year plan in 1984 by the Government of Delhi. In 1991, CATS involved 14 ambulances located at three stations, namely Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital - Hari Nagar, Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital and MCD hospital-Moti Nagar. Further changes in the location of ambulances were made in 1997 by placing them on 25 accident-prone sites. An additional set of 30 ambulances in 2001 and 31 ambulances in 2010 were added to the original fleet of CATS. The new set comprised of Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances. In 2012, 70 Eeco Care ambulances were added to the existing fleet of ambulances under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) scheme of the Government of India. This cumulates to 151 ambulances in the current fleet of CATS, which are distributed in different districts of Delhi as shown in Fig.1a).



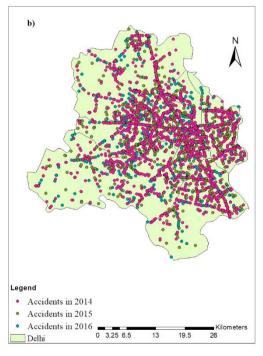


Fig.1 a) District wise demarcation of Delhi and distribution of CATS ambulances; b) Distribution of fatal accidents (2014-16) across Delhi

The services from CATS are available on a 24x7 basis free of cost. Calls to CATS are received through 102, and 1099 telephone numbers and the system is connected with Delhi Police, Delhi Fire Services, Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Government Hospitals and Delhi Secretariat for call forwarding and effective coordination for providing efficient services. The BLS ambulances are equipped with an oxygen cylinder, blood pressure apparatus and a stethoscope while the ALS ambulances in addition to the above equipment have a defibrillator-monitor, electrocardiogram, syringe pump, pulse oximeter and resuscitation kit, suction machine, and nebulizer which aid the prehospital treatment to be provided within the golden hour.

Fatal road traffic crash data for the years 2014-16 were obtained from the Delhi Traffic Police Headquarters. This data contained fields like date, time and place of accident, offending vehicle, victim and the first information report (FIR) number filed by the police. The coordinates of traffic crash locations were obtained using the FIR and plotted in ArcMap 10.3 (Fig. 1b).

Delhi has seen an increasing trend of the total number of accidents over the years from 2011 to 2015 (OGD, 2018), but the number of fatal accidents has been decreasing over the same period, as shown in Fig.2. According to an evaluation study of CATS, ambulances reached 26% of the emergency sites under 10 minutes, 70% under 20 minutes and 90% under 30 minutes (Gopinathan et al., 2001). In comparison, the response time standards (in minutes) for UK, US, Canada, and Australia are 8, 8:59, 8:59 and 15 respectively (Turner, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to optimize the EMS services in Delhi significantly.

South Delhi includes some of the major hospitals like All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and hence has been chosen as the study area. South Delhi has a population of over 2.7 million over an area of 247 sq.km. with a population density of 11,060 persons per sq.km.

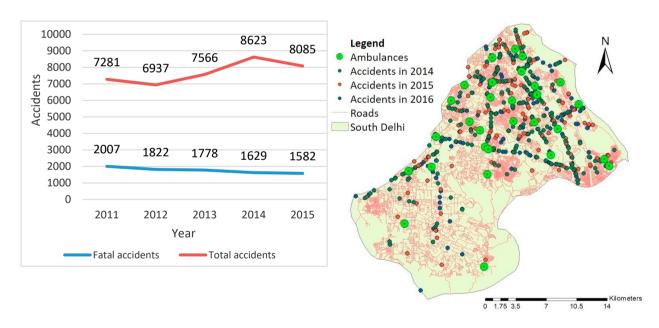


Fig.2 Trend showing total number of accidents and fatal crashes (2011-15)

Fig.3 Distribution of Accidents for years 2014-16 and ambulances in South Delhi

## 2. Background

There has been a significant amount of research on ambulance location problems. Ambulance location research also draws upon the rich history of advances made in facility location literature, particularly in coverage based p-median problems. Aringhieri et al. (2017), Brotcorne et al. (2003), Marianov and Revelle (1995) all provide a detailed review of the different types of ambulance location models in the literature. In this literature, we focus on some of the

important variants relevant to this research and refer the readers to the review papers for a more exhaustive list of works.

Toregas et al. (1971) first proposed a location set covering problem (LSCP) formulation for ambulance location whose objective was to minimize the number of ambulances required to cover all demand nodes. A drawback of this model is that the demand from all nodes are considered equal, and the number of facility sites per demand location does not exceed one. The number of facilities required for complete coverage is typically too high for the community/city to afford. Moreover, the last few facilities cover relatively little demand while adding significantly to the cost (Daskin, 2013). Church and Revelle (1972) developed the maximal coverage location problem (MCLP) variant, whose goal is to maximize population to be covered given a fixed number of facilities. MCLP overcame the drawback of LSCP by allowing the specification of demand at each node. Recently, Erkut et al. (2008) incorporated a new objective of maximizing the overall probability of survival. A monotonically decreasing function of response times was used to model the probability of survival.

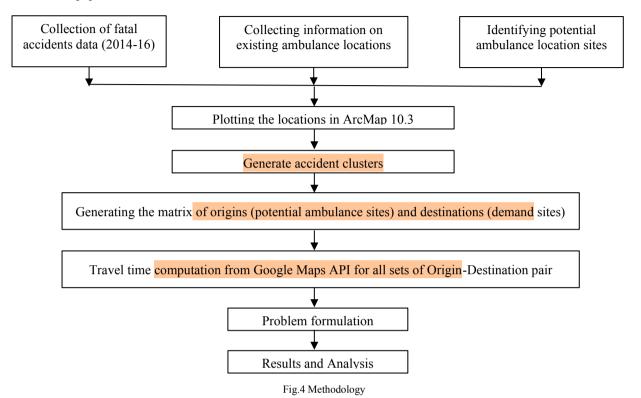
Mapping each potential accident site to one ambulance might not provide robust coverage, mainly when ambulance sites are associated with multiple potential crash locations. Researchers have adopted two major approaches to increase the reliability of coverage. Daskin (1983) developed a probabilistic approach and formulated the maximum expected covering location problem by accounting for the probability of ambulance being busy. Geroliminis et al. (2011), Knight et al. (2012) integrated a stochastic hypercube queueing model initially developed by Larson (1974) to locate emergency vehicles and assign them to service requests.

The other deterministic approach is to ensure that each potential crash location will have a primary and backup ambulance coverage. Daskin and Stern (1981) considered a secondary objective of maximizing backup coverage in addition to the primary objective of covering all nodes with a minimum number of ambulances. This model tends to cluster facilities around nodes with lesser demand, while higher demand areas might have single coverage. Hogan and Revelle (1986) developed backup coverage formulations that maximize demand covered twice within a pre-specified standard. Laporte et al. (2009) presented a slightly different variant of double coverage by considering two service standards  $r_1$  and  $r_2(r_2 > r_1)$ . The model ensures that all accident sites will be covered by an ambulance within  $r_2$  time units and a pre-specified proportion ( $\alpha$ ) of the demand must be covered by an ambulance within  $r_1$  time units. The formulation was solved using Tabu search heuristic and CPLEX on randomly generated data and for EMS in Montreal. Doerner et al. (2005) further extended Laporte et al. (2009) model by restricting the number served by each ambulance. The problem was solved using ant colony optimization algorithm and Tabu search heuristic. The model was applied to 1952 ambulances over 460 bases. Ant colony optimization was found to provide comparable computational times to Tabu Search. Laporte et al. (2009) compared three applications of the double coverage model and highlighted the coverage improvements obtained using the same number of ambulances. Liu et al. (2014) incorporated the deployment of two types of EMS vehicles, Basic life support (BLS) and Advanced life support (ALS), into the double standard model to take care of both fatal and non-critical cases. The model was applied to the Chicago study area with 200 demand sites, 92 potential facility locations and 75 ambulances and reliability of 40%. Genetic algorithm was used to solve the model. The authors show no significant reduction of coverage with the decrease in fleet size. Dibene et al. (2017) extended the double standard coverage model by generating demand scenarios (weekdays vs. off days, and within each day - night, morning, afternoon, and evening). A robust model was developed where a pre-specified proportion of the demand across all demand scenarios must be covered by an ambulance within  $r_1$  time units. The optimized locations were found to improve coverage over the existing configurations.

## 3. Data Preparation

As mentioned above, the South Delhi district of Delhi was chosen for this study. Fatal road traffic crash data for the years 2014-16 were obtained from the Delhi Traffic Police Headquarters in New Delhi. Spatial distribution of fatal road traffic crashes in South Delhi during 2014-16 are shown in Fig. 4, along with the locations of 29 CATS ambulances in the district. There was total of 635 fatal crashes in South Delhi through the years 2014-16. Accidents were clustered geographically to reduce the size of the ambulance optimization problem and make it manageable. The process of reducing the problem size (accident clustering), the identification of additional potential ambulance sites to optimize emergency service using the 29 ambulances, and the computation of travel time matrix to formulate an

ambulance coverage problem are described in the next three subsections. Fig. 4 shows the outline of the methodology used in this paper.



## 3.1. Accident Clustering

Accident clustering was guided by the definition of accident blackspot issued by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), Government of India, for National Highways. An accident blackspot is a 500 metres long stretch of road in which either five road accidents (involving fatalities/grievous injuries) or ten fatalities took place during last three years. Guided by this blackspot definition, clustering of accidents was performed using hotspot analysis in ArcGIS. The first step in this analysis is the removal of spatial outliers for point data. Points higher than three times the standard deviation of the near distances from each point to every other point are considered as spatial outliers and removed from the analysis. The remaining points are subjected to clustering using a tolerance radius of 250 metres. The threshold distance for clustering is chosen such that the degree of clustering (measured using z score) is maximized. This distance leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis of complete spatial randomness. It resulted in 120 accident clusters of different sizes (varying between 1 to 17 accidents) as shown in Fig. 5a).

### 3.2. Demand locations and facility sites identification

The hotspot analysis of accidents led to 120 demand points (accident clusters) containing a total of 635 accidents. Currently, CATS ambulances in South Delhi are stationed at 29 locations. Each location operates one ambulance. To optimize the usage of the existing fleet of 29 ambulances, additional potential ambulance locations were identified. 30 police stations, 4 fire stations and 37 other sites were identified as potential sites for locating ambulances. The other sites included public spaces, and government buildings near accident clusters where ambulances are not placed in the existing system. This leads to 100 potential sites for placing 29 ambulances and 120 demand points as shown in Fig. 5b).

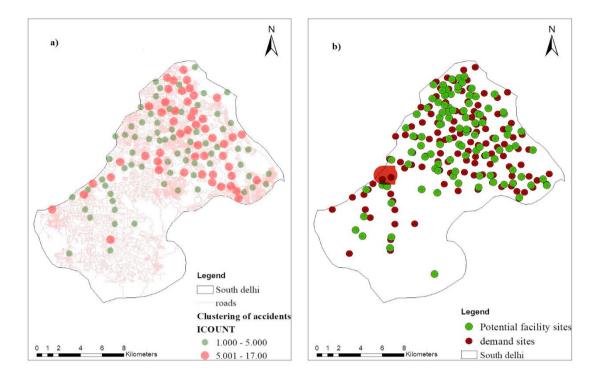


Fig.5a) Clustering of accidents for South Delhi; b) Demand sites and potential ambulance sites

#### 3.3. Travel time computation

Travel time for the 100x120 origin (potential ambulance sites) – destination (accident clusters) matrix was computed using the Distance Matrix API of Google Maps. The API provides travel times for both live traffic conditions and the historical average. Since the focus of the paper is tactical, historical average travel times were used to optimize ambulance locations.

With the set of demand points (120), potential ambulance sites (100), the number of ambulances (29), and the travel time matrix (100 x 120), a double standard model (DSM) as described earlier has been used, and the same has been mentioned in the next section.

#### 4. Problem formulation

The double standard model (DSM) developed by Gendreau et al. (1997) has been used in this paper for South Delhi.

- 4.1. Sets
- I Set of accident locations
- J Set of potential ambulance locations

#### 4.2. Parameters

 $a_i$  - Weight assigned to each demand node (cluster) i as the count of accidents

 $t_{ij}$  (or  $t_{ji}$ ) – Shortest travel time from i to j (or j to i) using historical data

 $r_1$  – Primary coverage standard (mins)

 $r_2$  – Secondary coverage standard (mins)

 $\alpha$  – Level of reliability

P – Number of ambulances to be located

 $p_j$  - Maximum no. of vehicles that can be located at each site j

n – Total number of accident sites (demand sites)

m – Total number of potential ambulance locations

#### 4.3. Decision Variables

 $z_i^k = 1$ , if demand node i gets covered k times within  $r_1$  time units and 0 otherwise  $a_{ij}^1 = 1$ , if  $(t_{ji} \le r_1)$  – A facility j covers demand at i within  $r_1$  time units and 0 otherwise  $a_{ij}^2 = 1$ , if  $(t_{ji} \le r_2)$  – A facility j covers demand at i within  $r_2$  time units and 0 otherwise  $n_j$  – Number of vehicles at site j

In this paper, the application of double standard model is done with the following assumptions:

- All ambulances are assumed to be available throughout the day.
- Ambulances are used for road traffic crashes only.

The formulation for the double standard model can be given as:

$$Maximize f = \sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i z_i^2 (1)$$

Subject to 
$$\sum_{j=1}^{m} a_{ij}^2 n_j \ge 1 \quad \forall i \in I$$
 (2)

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i z_i^1 \ge \alpha \sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i \tag{3}$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^{m} a_{ii}^{1} n_{i} \ge z_{i}^{1} + z_{i}^{2} \quad \forall i \in I$$
 (4)

$$z_i^2 \le z_i^1 \quad \forall i \in I \tag{5}$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^{m} n_i = P \tag{6}$$

$$n_j \le p_j \ \forall j \in J \tag{7}$$

$$z_i^1, z_i^2 \in \{0,1\} \quad \forall i \in I$$
 (8)

$$n_i$$
 is integer (9)

The objective function (1) maximizes double coverage of accident locations. Constraint (2) states that all accident locations must be covered within  $r_2$  mins. Constraint (3) expresses that at least a proportion  $\alpha$  of the accident sites is covered within  $r_1$  mins. The number of ambulances covering  $a_i$  demand within  $r_1$  mins should be greater than 1 if accident site i is covered once and 2 if it is covered twice within  $r_1$  is represented by Constraint (4). According to constraint (5), a demand location i is covered twice only if it is covered once. Constraint (6) states that the sum of ambulances placed at all the sites should not exceed total number available. Constraints (7) provides a limit on the number of ambulances placed at each potential site. Constraint (8) imposes binary constraint on the variables and constraint (9) restricts number of ambulances to be an integer value.

#### 5. Computational Results

Two scenarios are considered for the analysis of results obtained. The first scenario (S1) models the present system of 29 CATS ambulances operating from their current locations in South Delhi. The second scenario (S2) considers 100 potential sites to place the existing fleet of 29 ambulances to optimize the emergency service.

#### 5.1. Single coverage model

Initially, the single coverage model developed by Church and Revelle (1972) to maximize coverage given a fixed number of ambulances was solved for both S1 and S2. This exercise was done to get some insights into the working of the current system and the best that can be expected after optimization. Moreover, in the absence of an EMS Act in India, solutions to the single coverage model provide some idea about the feasible ranges of the parameters of the double coverage model  $(r_1, r_2, \alpha)$ .

Figure 6 shows the performance of the present (S1) and the optimized system (S2) for different response times. The existing system attains 100% single coverage for a response time of 22 mins, whereas the optimized system can reach all the accident locations within 14 mins.

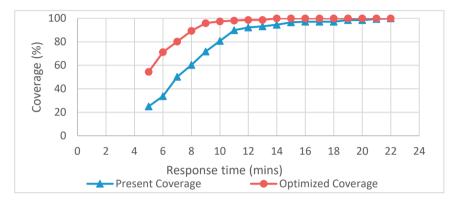


Fig.6 Comparison of coverage % between Existing system and Optimized system for varying response time

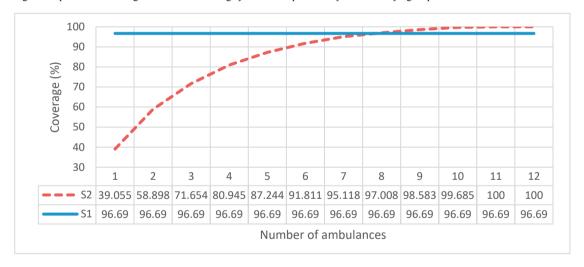


Fig. 7 Comparison of coverage % between Existing system (S1) and Optimized system (S2) for varying number of ambulances

Fig. 7 shows a comparison between S1 and S2 scenarios for the single coverage response time standard of  $r_1 = 15$  minutes. The maximum coverage provided by the existing fleet of 29 ambulances is 97%. Under the optimized system, the same level of coverage can be achieved by just eight ambulances. For  $r_1 = 15$  minutes, the present system is unable to achieve full coverage, whereas the optimized can do so using 11 ambulances. Hence any addition of a new ambulance would lead to additional cost without increasing coverage.

#### 5.2. Double coverage model

The EMS in India should reach the accident site within 20 mins in case of urban areas and 40 mins in case of the rural regions (Welfare and (NHSRC)). This is being taken up as Public Private Partnership and few states have adopted the standard in India. The analysis for the two scenarios considered has been done using the double standard model taking the primary coverage standard of  $r_1$ = 15 mins and secondary coverage standard of  $r_2$  = 20 mins and  $\alpha$ =0.95.

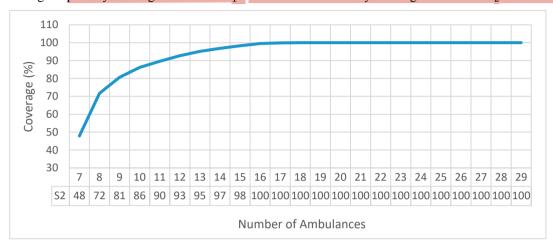


Fig.8 Obtained Coverage % for varying number of ambulances

The model for scenario S1 is infeasible for the above-mentioned standard of EMS services. This implies the existing system is not able to attain multiple coverage within secondary coverage standard of 20 mins and single coverage within primary coverage standard of 15 mins. Whereas in the optimized system, complete coverage is attained for reliability level for the mentioned standards. Fig. 8 shows that with optimal location of 16 ambulances, the EMS system can achieve complete double coverage with 95% reliability value.

## 6. Summary and Conclusions

This paper has applied both single and double coverage ambulance location models for assessing and improving the coverage provided by CATS ambulances in South Delhi. Fatal crash data for 2014-2016 were used for modelling. Crash data was reduced using clustering. A total of 100 locations were considered for placing the existing fleet of 29 ambulances to optimize the coverage provided by the ambulance system. Historical average travel times between ambulance locations and accident clusters were obtained from Google Maps API.

The results indicate that the optimized system can reach all accident sites within 14 minutes, whereas the present system would take 22 minutes for full coverage.

For a response time of 15 minutes, the present system of 29 ambulances provides 97% coverage. If ambulances were placed optimally, the same level of coverage could be achieved using only eight ambulances. The present system failed to achieve full coverage with 29 ambulances, but the optimized system can do so using 11 ambulances.

The analysis demonstrates that there is significant scope for improving the existing CATS ambulance configurations to provide better service to road users.

#### 6.1. Limitations:

This paper models for the static condition of ambulance location, i.e. ambulances are always available to take the call. Another limitation is that only fatal crashes are considered for optimizing the locations of CATS ambulances and the whole optimization was based on historical average travel times, which does not take into account worse traffic scenarios. All demand nodes are given equal priority and single type of vehicles are considered for the coverage of fatal crashes.

#### 6.2. Future extensions:

The analysis can be extended to the entire region of Delhi. Further, travel time variability can be incorporated to get an insight into the workability of both present and optimized systems under the worst traffic scenarios. The inclusion of non-fatal cases into the model will lead to segregation and prioritization of demand sites. Hence, different ambulance types could be taken into account.

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