

From Reactive to Proactive Planning of Ambulance Services

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joint work with Geertje Zuidhof

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Wiskunde redt levens

Kansberekening en modellering moeten ambulanceplanning in Amsterdam verbeteren.

JORINE ZANDHOFF



Een scherpere voorspelling met behulp van statistiek kunnen naar ambulances afreken voor minder geld. FOTO: J. ZANDHOFF

Raim dauidend wiskundigen aan het Europees Agentschap voor de veiligheid van de lucht (EASA) heeft voor de Europese Wiskunde Conferentie (ECW) in de Duitse stad Regensburg, Duitsland, gezegd dat hij niet alleen wiskunde, maar ook een beetje wiskunde.

Rob van der Mei, hoogleraar aan de Vrije Universiteit en afdelingshoofd bij het Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI), kent het gebied, maar hij is het er niet mee eens. "Wiskunde wordt vaak in een breder kader gebruikt, maar eigenlijk is het een veelzijdig vak."

Uit eigen ervaring

De ambulanceplanning in Nederland is de afgelopen jaren steeds meer gebaseerd op wiskunde. Dit is vooral te zien aan de hand van de recente ambulanceplanning in Amsterdam. Het is een gebied dat in de afgelopen jaren steeds meer wiskunde kent. Dit is vooral te zien aan de hand van de recente ambulanceplanning in Amsterdam. Het is een gebied dat in de afgelopen jaren steeds meer wiskunde kent.

medewerker aanwezig. Deze planning kan het meest van toepassing zijn op de ambulanceplanning in Amsterdam. Het is een gebied dat in de afgelopen jaren steeds meer wiskunde kent.

Wiskundigen doen Van der Mei niet behulp van statistiek en waarschijnlijkheidsrekening. Hij heeft van de regionale ambulanceplanning in Amsterdam geleerd van de geschiedenis. Hij weet precies wat het is en hoe het kan worden verbeterd.

'Ambulance is eerder ter plekke met een betere planning'

in het verleden meent uit te maken. Nu gaat hij proberen om de factoren die invloed hebben op de planning te verbeteren. Deze invloed kan hij in een normale situatie, die de meest voorkomende ambulanceplanning is.

What's the Problem?

- Targeted maximum "response time" for ambulance services is 15 minutes
- In many cases this target is not met
- Current planning of ambulance services reactive (over last 30+ years...)
 - ad-hoc real-time deployment decisions
 - significant amount of "idle time" among drivers
 - cost-inefficient
- Believe: missed efficiency gain by proactive planning



What's the Problem?



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- **Believe**: missed efficiency gain by **proactive planning**
 - anticipation to predictable bursts of calls
 - smartly spreading out ambulances over geographical area
- **Result**: “service quality” could be strongly improved by using smart planning techniques
- **Needed**: Decision Support System for “planning ambulance” services

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Typical Planning Questions



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- **How many ambulances should be employed and where should they be stationed?**
- **Which policies should be adopted as calls come in?**
- **How should dispatching decisions be made when multiple vehicles are available for dispatch?**
- **Should ambulances be used for less urgent patient transfers in addition to the usual emergency response function?**

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How to Tackle the Problem?



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Complication: randomness in service process

- travel times (traffic jams)
- chute times
- service times

Approach:

1. Develop good forecasting techniques for call volumes
2. Location and staffing algorithms
3. Real-time dispatching policies

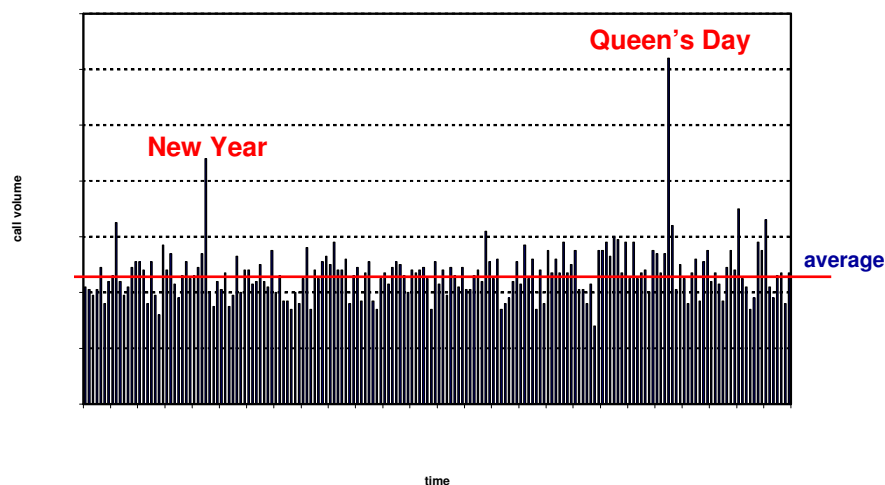


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Initial Data Analysis



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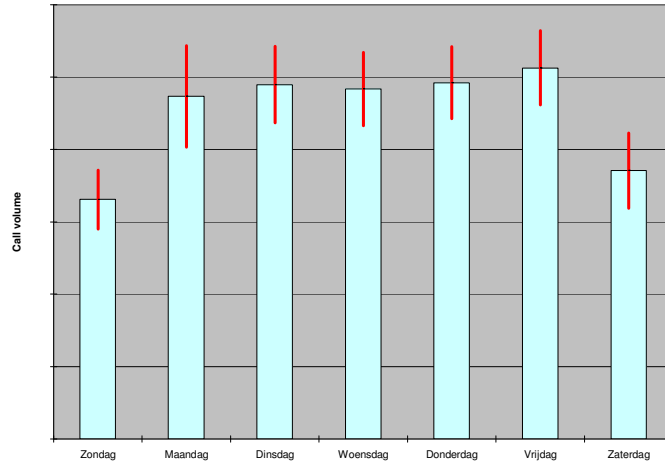


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Call Volume Distribution over Weeks



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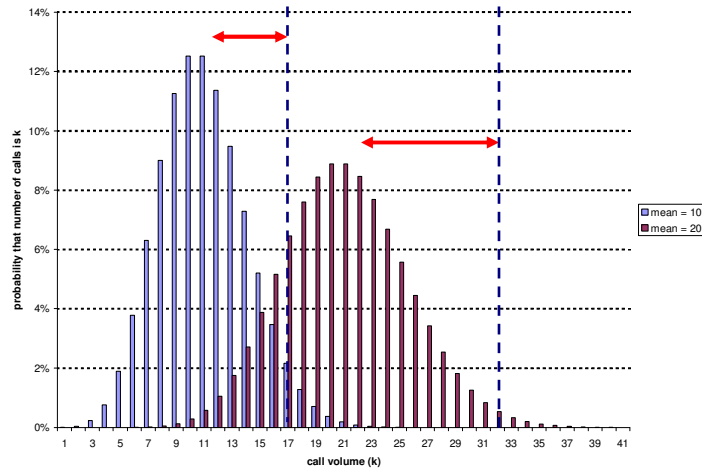
- In weekend's 20-30% fewer emergency calls
- Weekdays comparable

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Poisson Distribution



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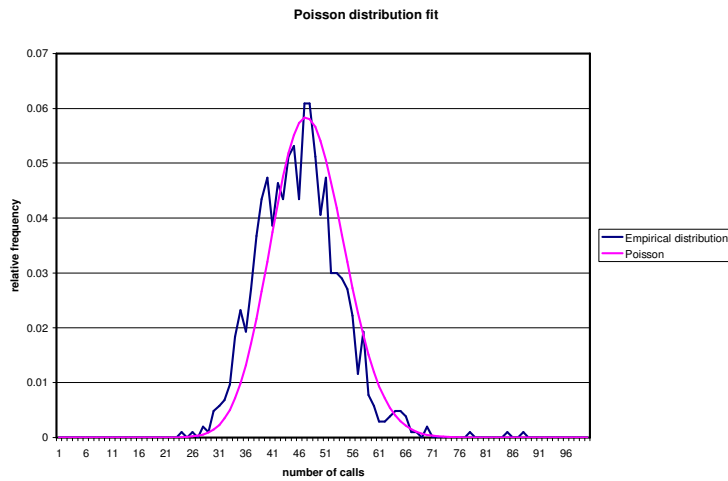


Theory: number of calls has Poisson distribution

$$\text{standard deviation} = \sqrt{\text{mean}}$$

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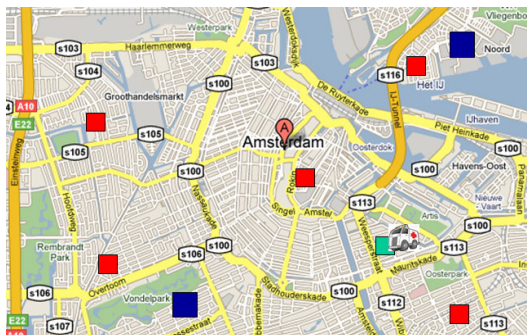
Empirical Validation



- Poisson distribution per day fits quite well
- Outliers have not been removed here
- Per-weekday plot would most likely lead to better results

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Forecasting Call Volumes



- home location
- base locations
- hospitals

Predictions for total ambulance call volumes
Time-correlation structures important for predictability
Initial observations from data analysis:

- calls within a single day correlated (1, 2 and 24 hours)
- calls independent of call volume the week before
- same distribution for Monday- Thursday

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Forecasting over Time and Space



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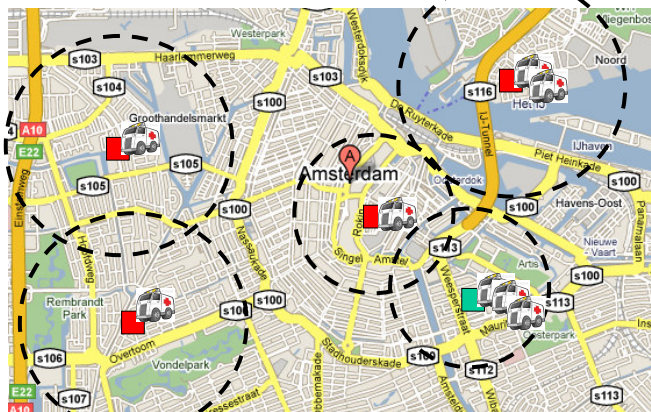


Predictions for call volumes over time and space

- historical data for different emergency classes
- space and time are strongly correlated
- what factors are correlated with call volumes?
 - weather circumstances
 - traffic information
 - demographic/geographic information?
- develop models that include such factors to get better forecasts

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Location and Staffing



-  home location
-  base locations
-  coverage

- How many base locations are needed and where?
- How many ambulance vehicles should be homed there?
- How to roster ambulance vehicles and personnel?

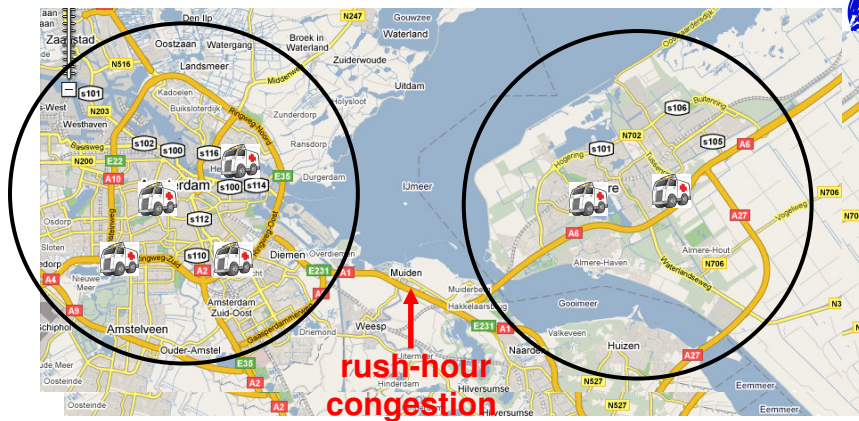
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Location and Staffing Problems

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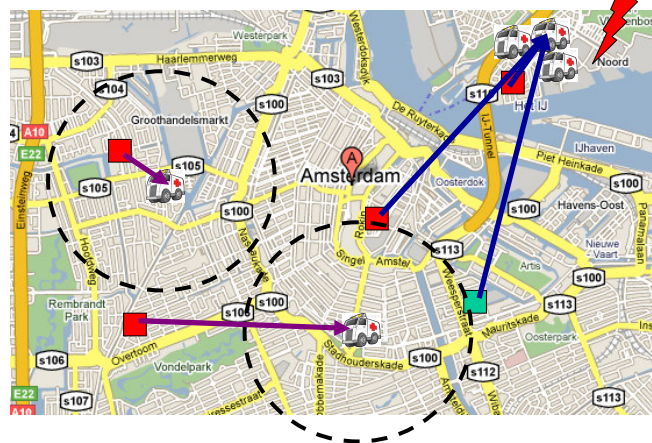


- Staffing proportional to expected call volume?
- Take into account expected travel times

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Real-Time Deployment

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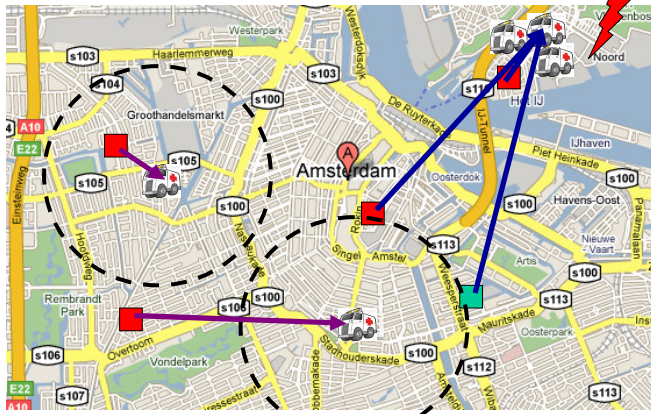
-  home location
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How to do smart real-time (re-)deployment?
 Limits to number of passive movement actions
 Markov decision framework to derive optimal actions

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Real-Time Deployment



- home location
- base locations
- coverage

Scientific complication: state-space explosion

Solutions:

- Approximate Dynamic Programming
- Parameterization of the value function

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Other Application Areas



Fire brigades: low-load scenario

Police patrolling: visibility crucial

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