



CIVIL DEFENCE

Cosaint Shíbhialta **Review**



2015



Welcome to the Civil Defence Review of 2015. The year ended in dramatic fashion with weeks of severe weather running into 2016. Civil Defence had one of the busiest periods in its history as a series of Atlantic storms battered the nation. Record rainfall was quickly followed by widespread flooding. Civil Defence volunteers gave many thousands of hours of dedicated service assisting the Principal Response Agencies in responding to these events..

Vast numbers of sandbags were filled and delivered, hundreds of people were evacuated from their homes, motorists were rescued from flood waters, houses were pumped out and farmers assisted in getting feed to their animals. We transported nurses to see their patients and made regular visits to check on vulnerable people. Our volunteers received a huge amount of positive press coverage for their dedicated service to the community.

Missing person searches were an ongoing feature of our activities. Civil Defence assisted the Gardaí and the Coast Guard in 80 searches across the country, some of them lasting several weeks. Our volunteers showed great dedication in quietly going about this sensitive work. This included recovering a number of bodies, bringing some sense of closure to grieving families.

An updated Service Level Agreement was signed with the Irish Coast Guard in September. There are many similarities between the two organisations, both being State funded and volunteer based. There was excellent co-operation between the two groups in a number of coastal searches during the year.

The Civil Defence College had another busy year. A wide range of courses were run in Roscrea, at the Phoenix Training Centre and at local centres. This would not be possible without the dedicated work of our instructors throughout the country as well as those working in the College.

The Department of Defence provided increased funding for Civil Defence in 2015. This allowed us replace some of the ageing vehicles on our fleet. A new vehicle marking policy was introduced. Standardisation of the markings on our vehicles will help improve the professional image of the organisation.

The year was also notable for some very welcome improvements to Civil Defence accommodation in Wicklow, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford. Unfortunately a serious fire destroyed both our accommodation and much of our equipment in Kilkenny. The unit showed great resilience in quickly getting back to operational readiness in time for the severe weather a few weeks later.

The White Paper on Defence published in 2015 restates the Government's commitment to maintaining and further developing Civil Defence as an effective volunteer based organisation that supports the emergency services.

This magazine gives a flavour of some of Civil Defences activities in 2015.

People

Right: Members of the Civil Defence Forum making a presentation to Bill Smith on his retirement as Director General of Civil Defence in March.



Left: Stephen Hall replaced Bill Smith as Principal Officer Civil Defence Branch. He is pictured on the right welcoming a delegation from Shanghai Municipal Civil Defence who visited Roscrea in November.

Right: Civil Defence Officers at their annual training seminar which was hosted by Wicklow Civil Defence.



Left: President Michael D Higgins meeting with members of Galway Civil Defence on duty at Terryland Park.

Severe Weather

Civil Defence had one of its busiest ever periods during December and January 2015/16. A series of storms brought record rainfall and widespread flooding. Over 700 volunteers from right across the country gave many thousands of hours of service, often in very poor weather. The main duties were as follows:

- ▲ Evacuation of people from flooded homes
- ▲ Transportation of people for provisions
- ▲ Water pumping
- ▲ Filling, distribution & deployment of sandbags
- ▲ Assisting Gardaí with traffic control
- ▲ Lifting and moving of furniture etc. (pre-flooding of homes)
- ▲ Helping with salvage (post flooding of homes)
- ▲ Monitoring water levels
- ▲ Manning of Command & Control Units
- ▲ Transporting home helps
- ▲ Transporting patients from Nursing Homes
- ▲ Providing refreshments to those on relief duties
- ▲ Rescue of persons from cars trapped in floodwaters
- ▲ Recovery of three bodies from floodwaters
- ▲ Transporting supplies to isolated families
- ▲ Distributing Dehumidifiers
- ▲ Logging calls at Call Centre
- ▲ Moving livestock from flooded lands and farmyards
- ▲ Transporting feed to isolated livestock
- ▲ Providing bedding to local authorities for possible evacuations
- ▲ Assisting Dept of Social Protection in assessing flood damage
- ▲ Opening of storm drains
- ▲ Diversion of rivers
- ▲ Distributing public health notices
- ▲ Transporting children to schools
- ▲ Transporting council staff



Above: Mayo



Right: Tipperary



Left: Cork South

Below: Limerick



Galway



Above: Longford

Right: Mayo - Water pumping from flooded premises in Crossmolina



Kerry Civil Defence - Sandbags at the ready



Cork West



Above: Donegal

Below: All Terrain Hagglund Vehicle in Longford



Training Review 2015

The Civil Defence College introduced a number of new courses during 2015 and enhanced the use of blended learning as a teaching tool. This allowed volunteers to complete some course work in their own time and without having to be away from family.

Training is designed to equip volunteers with the skills and ability to assist the Principal Response Agencies (i.e. Garda Síochána, Health Service Executive and Local Authorities) and provide community support. Throughout 2015 the Civil Defence College continued to engage with the PRAs and the Defence Forces to develop and

deliver training in a manner which is beneficial to all concerned. We have built on existing synergies to produce combined training courses which are high quality, in addition to standardising training and sharing of skills, it has resulted in savings for all concerned from a resource and financial aspect.

The College Principal and two Instructors graduated from NUI

Galway with a Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education), the three are registered with the Teaching Council of Ireland. The two-year course was intense but very rewarding; the training delivered by and through the Civil Defence College has reflected the new teaching strategies and methods learned during the course. The third college instructor commenced the final year of the



Above: Manual Handling

Right: Rope Rescue Training in Donegal

Below: Welfare Training Course at CD Headquarters



Above: Roscrea January 2015

Below: Welfare Course, McKee Barracks



Above: NUI Galway Graduation

Below: Rescue 3 Award for Civil Defence



NUI Galway, Education & Training degree during 2015.

The Civil Defence College introduced the Voluntary Sector Training Skills (VSTS) FETAC Level 6 course during 2015. This was introduced by Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI formerly FETAC) Ireland as an option to replace the original Train the Trainer Course. The Civil Defence College is the first organisation to develop and deliver this course. During 2015, 37 Civil Defence Volunteers completed the course successfully.

Further training for Civil Defence Officers in the Management of Water and Flood Incidents was

delivered during 2015. This training and the flood and swiftwater first response training continued to be used throughout 2015; specifically in the last few weeks when Civil Defence was on call throughout the country on a 24-hour basis.

The certification and recertification of Civil Defence Officers, instructors and volunteers continued throughout the year. Civil Defence Officers completed presentation skills training during 2015 and ongoing plans to further develop training courses for Civil Defence Officers.

The table below indicates the number of courses delivered and

number of certificates issued by the Civil Defence College during 2015. The numbers include training courses delivered by Civil Defence nationwide and through the Civil Defence College. In addition to the training courses, a number of seminars/exercises/workshops were held which did not result in the issuing of certification.

Table Details of Civil Defence Courses delivered and certificates issued

Courses/Seminars/ Exercises	801
Numbers Attended	4,229
Certificates Issued	3,772



Missing Person Searches

Missing person searches are one of the most frequent call outs for Civil Defence. Civil Defence was involved in 80 searches in 2015. Civil Defence only attends at a search on request from the Principal Response Agencies, such as the Gardaí, the Coast Guard or the Fire Service. We will not attend at searches on request of members of the public. Civil Defence has extensive experience in searching both urban and rural areas. This includes searching rivers, lakes and inshore waters. Many of our searches involve searching rivers and canals. Water awareness and Swiftwater training allows our volunteers to safely search these areas.

As well as teams of highly trained volunteers Civil Defence has a wide range of equipment for use in searches. This includes



Communications Incident Control

command and control vehicles, communications equipment, a fleet of 4x4 vehicles, boats and trained search dogs. Our volunteers are equipped with appropriate personal protective equipment. They are

also fully insured. During 2015 our unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capability was deployed in a number of searches. Eight regionally based UAV teams will come into service in 2016.



Above: K9 Units in training

Below: Lucan Search

Tipperary – joint training with the Gardaí



River Boyne Search



Command & Control Unit



Cork missing Person Search



UAV training over the River Liffey

Radiation Monitoring

Civil Defence was established in 1951 as part of the national response to the threat of nuclear radiation from atomic weapons or from accidents at nuclear power plants. The Warden Service was a key part of Civil Defence for many years. Wardens were trained to collect samples, take radiation readings and to advise members of public on what to do in the event of an attack.



Graetz meters used to take background radiation readings.

In 2015 the Department of Defence signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding with the Environmental Protection Agency. In the event of a nuclear incident Civil Defence will collect samples of e.g. soil and water across the country and deliver these to the EPA. Civil Defence will also take background radiation readings. These readings will supplement the information gathered from the EPAs static radiation monitors. Newly calibrated radiation monitoring equipment was issued to all Civil Defence Units in 2015. A training programme was also delivered followed by a successful national training exercise.



Civil Defence volunteers collecting samples for further analysis by the EPA.



Sligo Civil Defence volunteers assisted during the royal visit in May 2015.

Civil Defence 2015 in numbers

There were 3,686 active volunteers organised in 29 Civil Defence Units across Ireland.

Civil Defence volunteers were deployed to over 1,500 events/activities during the course of the year.

Activities included:

- 80 Missing Person Searches
- 920 Sporting Events
- 420 Community Events
- 65 Climatic/Severe Weather Relief Efforts

New Members

New Members are always welcome. Enrolment enquiries may be made through your local Civil Defence Officer. Contact details are on our website.

www.civildefence.ie



Boat training on Lough Derg.



Roscommon, joint training with the Coast Guard.

Photo of the Month

A prize of a €50 one-4-all voucher is awarded each month for the best photograph submitted on any theme related to Civil Defence. The winning photographs are published on the Civil Defence website. Entries can be submitted to civildefence@defence.ie. The 2015 winners are shown here on the front and back pages.

