



# CIVIL DEFENCE

## Cosaint Shibhialta

# 2025





### Foreword

Is mór an onóir agus an pléisiúr dom Iris Cosanta Sibhialta na bliana seo a chur i láthair agus an deis seo a thapú le labhairt go díreach le hOibrithe Deonacha Cosanta Sibhialta ar fud an Stáit.

Níl a leithéid de rud ann agus bliain chiúin sa Chosaint Shibhialta agus ní raibh 2024 ciúin ná baol air!

Bhí mé an-sásta bualadh le go leor agaibh, na hOibrithe Deonacha, le linn ceann de mo choinní oifigiúla mar an tAire Cosanta.

During my visit to the new Civil Defence Headquarters in Roscommon, I saw first hand the enthusiasm and dedication that you all demonstrate each and every day.

In March of last year, we presented long-service medals to volunteers who have built up decades of service.

Commitment to volunteering should always be recognised and commended, though few organisations can lay claim to volunteer commitment spanning 60 years!

There have been many interesting developments in Civil Defence during 2024.

In June, Civil Defence won a Civil Service Innovation and Excellence award in the Workforce of the Future category, demonstrating excellence in delivering the Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS), which will provide real-time and insightful information for the Civil Defence nationally.

VEMS tracks activity across Civil Defence and truly reflects the scale of training and duties undertaken by Volunteers. It was pleasing to see the work of the Civil Defence Branch and Civil Defence Officers recognised nationally.

There was international attention too when Dublin Civil Defence provided medical, rescue and fire cover at the Aviva Stadium for the Europa League Final in May.

Throughout the year, particularly in the summer months, Civil Defence across the State provided medical cover for hundreds of local events in their communities; a key, if unheralded, role.

I was pleased to meet Volunteers at the Ploughing Championships in September, where Civil Defence equipment and vehicles were on show and the sun made a welcome return. It is important that Civil Defence take opportunities like this to highlight their role in working with the principal response agencies.

In this regard, I was pleased that Civil Defence was again able to benefit from the Dormant Accounts Fund, with an additional €400,000 allocated in 2024.

This allocation is part of a continuous multi-annual programme to modernise Civil Defence's vehicle and boat fleet, the cumulative benefit of which is there to see in every Civil Defence Unit, where Volunteers now access a modern fleet, fit for purpose and properly resourced to respond to emergency and non-emergency calls.

Later in September saw the official opening of Dublin Civil Defence's new headquarters in Cherry Orchard. The local authorities in Dublin have worked together to fund and renovate a fine new headquarters for Dublin Civil Defence.

Finally, in December, Laois Civil Defence Officer, Damien Dollard, won Volunteer Manager of the Year at the Volunteer Ireland Awards. It was a richly-deserved award for Damien and reflects the high standard of our Civil Defence Officers who work long hours and undertake so many disparate tasks, keeping their Units ready for response.

I wish to sincerely thank our Volunteers and their Officers. Your ongoing commitment to Civil Defence makes it the unique organisation it is today. As Tánaiste and Minister for Defence I have enjoyed meeting Volunteers and hope to meet many more of you throughout 2025.

**Simon Harris TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Defence**



The Tánaiste has outlined another busy year for Civil Defence in 2024 and I want to echo his thanks to Civil Defence Officers and Volunteers across the State. I want to assure you that supporting Civil Defence remains a priority for the Department of Defence and we will continue to work to ensure you have the resources you need to meet the challenges ahead.

At the various Civil Defence functions I have attended, I have developed a strong understanding of the commitment of the Volunteers and the scope of the duties undertaken across the State. The high level of training and the increasingly modern vehicles, boats and equipment you possess point to an increasingly 'professional' Volunteer organisation, which reflects so well on Civil Defence but can make significant demands on Volunteers. We will work to support and assist you in maintaining these high standards. It was a pleasure to meet many of you in 2024 and I look forward to seeing many more of you throughout 2025.

With best wishes,

**Jacqui McCrum, Secretary General, Department of Defence**

# Civil Defence 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024

## Civil Defence Activities:

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 Civil Defence volunteers completed **3,054** taskings.

Taskings were undertaken as follows:



## Vehicle and Boat Fleets Grant Aid:

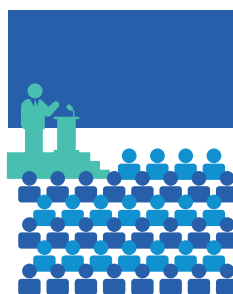


Grant-Aid totalling **€541,731**

was paid to Local Authorities towards the upgrade of the Civil Defence vehicle and boat fleets.

## College Training:

A total of **612** training courses were completed.



**4,301**  
Volunteer members received training.

Instructor and Responder Training was conducted in the following disciplines:



An Roinn Cosanta  
Department of Defence

## Contents

- 2 ..... Foreword
- 3 ..... Infographic & Contents
- 4 ..... New Civil Defence Uniform
- 5 ..... National Ploughing Championships
- 6 ..... Our People
- 8 ..... Disciplines & Resources Map
- 9 ..... Search Seminar
- 11 ..... Technical & Training Review
- 14 ..... Civil Defence Throughout The Year



# New Civil Defence Uniform

In 2021, the Department undertook a project to design new workwear for the Civil Defence. It set about taking views, by way of surveying units, to understand what worked, and more importantly, where could improvements be made on the existing workwear.

The Department then put together a working group comprised of Civil Defence Branch, and representative CDOs – Fergus Byrne and Veronica Forde. With the support of OGP, the specifications were finalised and the competition went to market in 2022.

In December 2023, the Department entered into a contract with Tailored Image for workwear.

This new contract would serve to modernise the Civil Defence workwear for the coming years.

In 2024 the first orders were made. Throughout 2024 the Branch worked the workwear consultants and supplier through various stages of the process from signing off on materials and design, to finalising all samples for bulk production.

The Department was delighted to see sizing sets delivered to the Branch in August 2024. The procurement team then worked with all CDOs and ACDOs to develop a workwear fitting schedule for active volunteers.

439 volunteers travelled to the Phoenix Training Centre or Roscrea for their fitting. 661 volunteers were fitted in locations such as Cork, Cavan, Galway & Wexford. The job at hand aside, it was fantastic for the Branch to meet and chat with so many volunteers during these visits.

Towards the end of October, over 22,000 workwear items began to arrive in stores. The Branch worked diligently to process the goods on



VEMs to allow orders from units to begin.

To date – there are 10,350 items rolled out across all units.

The roll out of this project would not have been possible were it not for the collaborative efforts of units assisting with fitting schedules, and Branch employees processing orders in the stores. A special thanks to the CDOs who are on the working group, Fergus Byrne and Veronica Forde.

The Department is currently working with the suppliers on year 2 orders, and are working with the aforementioned working group members to update the uniforms policy.



# National Ploughing Championships 2024

Civil Defence hosted a huge number of visitors to our stand at the Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska, Co Laois, over the course of the three days 17-19 September.

Civil Defence volunteers from Kilkenny, Wicklow, Offaly, Tipperary, Carlow, Kildare and Longford met visitors from all corners of the country.

Our extensive collection of vehicles and equipment were on display and CPR demonstrations attracted visitors young and older to participate and learn while having some fun.

The Laois unit were also on duty over the course of the three days supporting the NPA and An Garda Síochána.



# Our People

Civil Defence welcomed two new personnel to the Civil Defence Officer (CDO) role and nine new personnel to the Assistant Civil Defence Officer (ACDO) role during the course of 2024.

Maeve Hourihan replaced the retired Niall Twomey as Civil Defence Officer in Cork West while Michelle Colclough replaced the retired Kathryn Peacock

as Civil Defence Officer in Kilkenny. Assistant Civil Defence Officers were appointed to Clare (Aileen McMahon), Cork City (Dave Sweeney), Cork West (Peter Losberg), Donegal (Karl Murtagh), Galway (Kieran Connell), Meath (Patricia Carton), Monaghan (Keith Murphy), Offaly (Bob Flynn) and Wicklow (Edel Mullen).



▲ Maeve Hourihan, CDO Cork West

▼ Aileen McMahon, ACDO Clare



▲ Michelle Colclough, CDO Kilkenny

▼ Peter Losberg, ACDO Cork West







▲ *Karl Murtagh, ACDO Donegal*



▲ *Kieran Connell, ACDO Galway*



▲ *Patricia Carton, ACDO Meath*



▲ *Keith Murphy, ACDO Monaghan*



▲ *Bob Flynn, ACDO Offaly*



▲ *Edel Mullen, ACDO Wicklow*

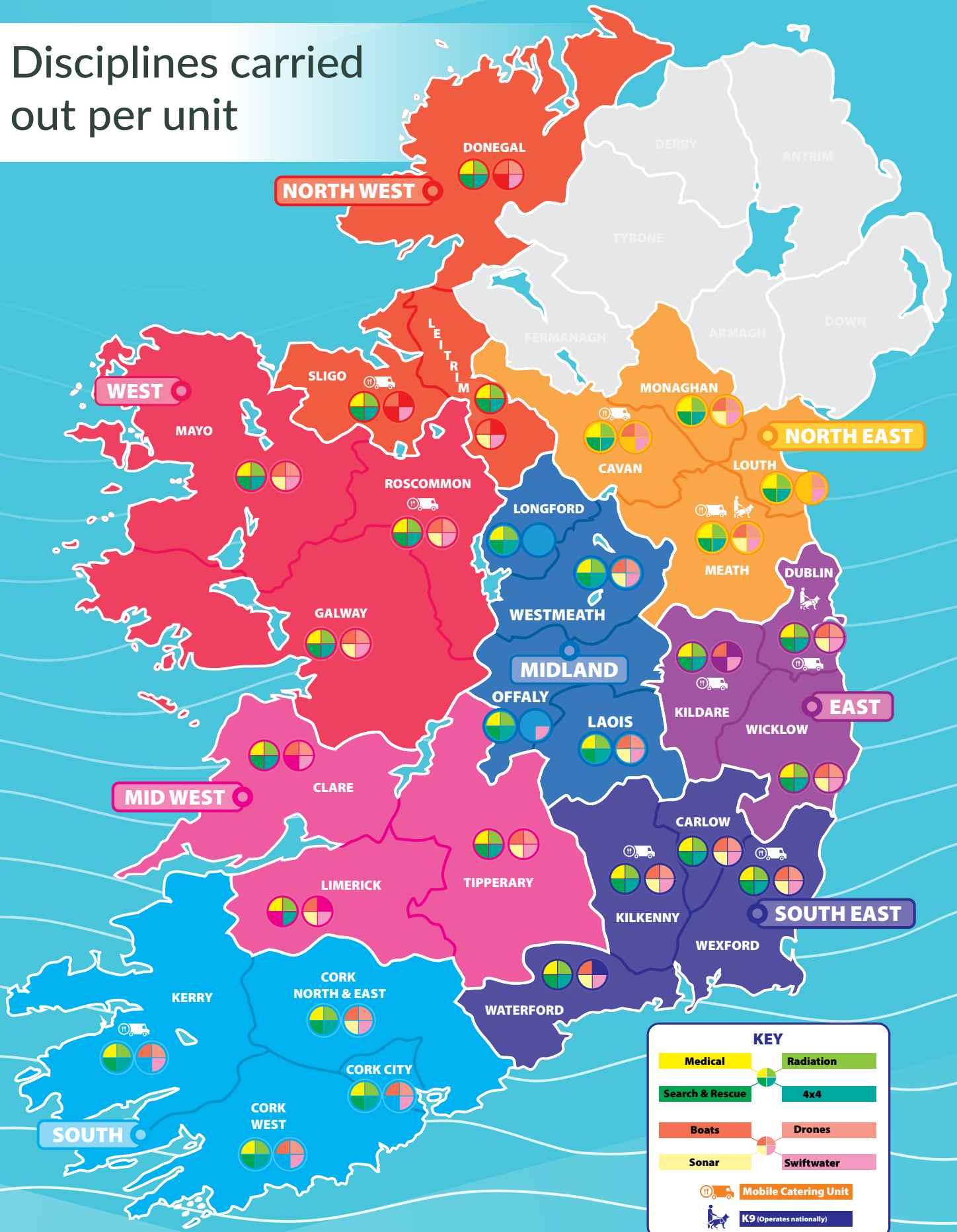


# CIVIL DEFENCE

*Cosaint Shibhialta*



## Disciplines carried out per unit





# Lost, found, and Everything in Between: Civil Defences Search Seminar



When we think of Civil Defence, we picture well-trained teams, specialised equipment, and people committed to helping others. This level of preparedness is no accident—it's the result of rigorous training and a deep understanding of people, environments, and the legal and social landscape.

At our Annual Search Seminar, around 100 volunteers gathered to explore six key themes shaping modern search operations. From the role of the Coroners Court, to search strategies and environmental impact, this article captures the key insights and takeaways from the day.

## Opening Address: Cep Carty

Cep Carty, Head of the Civil Defence Branch, welcomed attendees and acknowledged the emotional impact of National Missing Persons Day, where families shared heartfelt stories. She noted Civil Defence's role as a trusted partner of An Garda Síochána, which has developed as result of our strong collaboration,

expert training, and specialised equipment.

Cep also emphasised Civil Defence's commitment to volunteer development and support through training, critical incident stress management (CISM), and peer support networks. She also highlighted the significant continuing investment to modernise our fleet and equipment, including new incident response vehicles, upgraded workwear, advanced drones, sonar, and improved communication systems—all enhancing search effectiveness and volunteer safety.

Cep wrapped up by reiterating the importance of Civil Defence as a key element of Ireland's search response and support for families in crisis.

## The Coroners Court: Legal and Ethical Considerations

Joe Kelly, Tipperary County Coroner, provided a compelling overview of the Coroners Court and its relevance to Civil Defence. The discovery of a deceased person by our search

volunteers will lead into the start of a legal investigation into the circumstances of the death. Joe commented on the importance of careful scene management, evidence preservation, and coordination with Gardaí, and these considerations are embedded in our search training.

Key takeaways included respecting remains, avoiding contamination, and understanding that proper protocol is essential for family closure and potential criminal investigation.

## Leave No Trace: Balancing Search and Environmental Stewardship

Ruairí Ó Conchúir from Local Authority Waters discussed how Civil Defence can operate responsibly in environmentally sensitive areas; particularly in a training context. From peatlands to forests and coastlines, search teams were encouraged to minimise damage by following 'Leave No Trace' principles.

Drone use, thoughtful planning, and environmentally conscious training

exercises, can reduce harm to fragile ecosystems. Even in emergencies, care must be taken to avoid unnecessary environmental impact. The message: “Stop, think, consider – leave no trace.”

## Searching for Older People: Understanding the Person Behind the Profile

Mary McMahon from Age Friendly Roscrea addressed the increasing number of missing person incidents involving older individuals. Whether due to dementia, confusion, or isolation, the search for older adults often requires a different approach.

Mary stressed the importance of avoiding assumptions and instead seeking insights from friends, family, and communities. Understanding daily routines, social patterns, and recent life changes is critical. Her quote, “If you design for the old, you include everyone,” was a powerful reminder of the value of inclusive planning.

Volunteers were encouraged to “think like they do” when searching for older people—emphasising empathy and personal context over generalisation.

## Lost in the Slieve Blooms: Real-World Response

CDO Damien Dollard (Laois) and Assistant Civil Defence Officer Bob Flynn (Offaly) shared experiences from the Slieve Bloom Mountains, an increasingly popular spot for walkers & cyclists. While picturesque, the terrain can quickly disorient hikers, especially in poor weather.

In 2023, Laois and Offaly Civil Defence Units introduced a joint response protocol to improve cross-boundary collaboration. A 2024 case study involving an injured hiker illustrated this approach in action. Civil Defence used MXLocate to find the casualty, provided care, and transported them to safety, despite access and communication challenges.



Key lessons included the importance of structured incident command, inter-unit coordination, and continual training. This case reinforced how technology, teamwork, and planning intersect to deliver a successful person-centred response.

## Let's Talk About Suicide: A Conversation That Matters

Michael Collins from the National Office for Suicide Prevention tackled one of the most difficult topics—how to talk about suicide. People often fear that raising the topic of suicide may make the situation worse, but evidence shows that compassionate conversations can help save lives.

Michael introduced the “Let’s Talk About Suicide” initiative, aimed at breaking stigma and giving people practical tools to respond. Simply asking “Are you thinking about suicide?”—with empathy and sincerity—can be the first step toward help.

Volunteers will soon have access to an e-learning module designed to build confidence in approaching and supporting those in crisis.

## Longford Missing Person Case: A Reflection on Endurance and Teamwork

Emma Reid and Peter Keenan shared a deeply personal account of a 12-day search for a missing

person in Longford. From the moment the person was reported missing, volunteers worked tirelessly, supported by units from Roscommon, Mayo, Offaly, and beyond.

Search Teams, Drones, K9 units, and MAPYX technology were key cogs in the search response, but every role mattered—whether in the field or behind the scenes.

On the 12th day, the person was discovered in a dense forest. The retrieval required a coordinated effort from Civil Defence, Gardaí, and the fire service. Although the outcome was tragic, the dedication of volunteers brought closure and showed the power of community, preparation, and resilience.

## Final Thoughts: Why We Search

At the heart of Civil Defence is a simple truth: we volunteer to search, because we care. Whether we’re searching for a missing child, a vulnerable person or recovering someone lost in the Irish uplands, every operation is driven by our commitment to community.

So, next time you put on your Civil Defence Uniform and step into the unknown, remember: that your volunteering matters. Every search is a chance to bring someone home, bring a family closure, and make our communities safer. This shows a dedication that we should all be proud of.



# Training & Technical

## 2024 Review

### Training & Technical:

#### 1. Food Safety, Welfare & Evacuation Centres

A working group consisting of Civil Defence Officers/Assistant Civil Defence Officers and Branch Staff carried out a review of the Welfare discipline in Civil Defence in 2024. Up to now, training was provided to Food Safety and You Level 1 for Instructor, and Operative to our volunteers. Following the review we are extending the training in this area in 2025:

- Food Safety & You Level 1 Operative training will roll out across all units nationwide in 2025
- Food Safety & You Level 1 Instructor training – 2 further training courses completed in 2024. This will allow our Instructors to train volunteers in their unit/region to Level 1 operative.
- Primary Course in Food Safety Level 2 Operative training will be provided to all units involved with the prepping and cooking of food.
- Management of Food Safety Level 3 training will be provided to all welfare units with a Mobile Catering Unit or Industrial Kitchen.

As part of the review the working group are developing Standard Operating Guidelines and Risk Assessments in Welfare and Evacuation Centres, which will be issued in 2025.

#### 2. TETRA Fleetmap Change:

CDB and Tetra Ireland have created a new Fleetmap for Civil Defence Units. Listening to feedback from CDU highlighted the need to amend the previous Fleetmap. The primary objective of this change is to bolster the effectiveness of communications within each Civil Defence Unit. In addition, the new

Fleetmap will enhance the ability for interoperable communications with the PRAs and associated agencies.

All CDO radios will be programmed to have access to all the Talk Groups outlined below. In addition, the remainder of the Tetra radios (circa 220) will be programmed to have access to the relevant Civil Defence Unit TG and the relevant Civil Defence MEM Regional TG - (2 TG in Total).

All Talk Groups have a national profile, thus ensuring functionality throughout the Country.

- 29 Individual Civil Defence Unit TGs
- 8 Civil Defence MEM Regional TGs
- 1 Civil Defence National TG
- 8 Civil Defence Event TGs
- 8 Civil Defence Training TGs
- 4 Provincial Non-aligned interoperable TGs
- 1 National Non-aligned interoperable TG
- 4 Provincial Utilities interoperable TGs
- 1 National Utilities interoperable TG
- 4 Provincial Marine interoperable TGs
- 26 County interoperable TGs

#### 3. Casualty Instructor Recertification

Q3 & 4 was a busy time for everyone involved in the recertification of casualty instructors from CFR to EFR. The recertification process was new for some, as there had been no formal in-person recertification in 2020 or 2022.

There was a mix of online self-paced training and in-person workshops. It was very important from a quality perspective to see the instructors demonstrate their skills at the workshops.

We are now beginning to plan for 2026

## 4. Drone Training

There were two in-person training days for new pilots in the Open A2 Category in Cork and Dublin, and these were very successful. The students went on to complete the lessons and exams online.

There were some learnings for us in the training section as we will have a large cohort of pilots up for renewal in 2026. These were the first pilots trained on the new accreditation.

A number of units have the M30T craft which can operate in wind and rain. This has now been discontinued and we will be running a procurement exercise to source the next iteration, for units who are newly registered with the Irish Aviation Authority.



▲ *Kilkenny sonar exercise*



## 5. Sonar

Training continued in 2024 with training delivered to a number of units. There have been some good results in missing person searches using this technology. We plan to expand the rollout of the Portable Underwater Mapping Aid (PUWMA) system which is ostensibly a Humminbird Helix in a box with added features and a power supply. See image below.







▲ Bere Island EMT Weekend



▲ Medical Director Bere Island EMT Weekend



▲ Mayo at Ireland West Charity Fundraiser



▲ Sligo Medical Response at Glencar Lough Swim



▲ Monaghan First Aid Exercise



▲ Malahide Vintage Show



▲ Wexford St Patricks Day



▲ Xmas Swim, Lavey



# Civil Defence Throughout The Year

## Europa League Final – Aviva Stadium



**24 May 2024**

Dublin Civil Defence provided Fire, Rescue and Medical Cover for the Europa League Final in the Aviva Stadium on Tuesday evening, 21st May. The unit also provided transport for An Garda Síochána from the RDS to the Stadium with assistance from Offaly, Kildare, Kilkenny, Louth, Laois, Wicklow and Meath units.

## Clash of the Titans, Castlerea Boxing Club



**5 April 2024**

Roscommon Civil Defence provided medical cover at Castlerea Boxing Club on Friday 5th April for the 'Clash of the Titans' competition between the Irish amateur Olympic boxing team and their Ukrainian counterparts.

## Kildare CD supporting Barretstown Children's Charity

## Poc Fada – Cooley Mountains



**6 August 2024**

A hard weekend's work for Louth Civil Defence volunteers at this year's All Ireland Poc Fada in the Cooley mountains. Conditions turned treacherous with heavy rain and fog and the volunteers worked tirelessly in near zero visibility to ensure all patrons made it safely off the mountain.





# Kerry Civil Defence – Storm Bert Relief Efforts

**25 November 2024**

On Saturday 23rd November Kerry Civil Defence had crews in Listowel to assist Kerry County Council and Kerry Fire and Rescue Service in the aftermath of devastating flooding. Civil Defence volunteers evacuated people and pets from their homes, pumped flood waters, transported affected people, and deployed sandbags throughout the day.



## Kirby Way Cycle 2024



**2 September 2024**

On Friday 30th August Laois, Offaly and Galway Civil Defence Units provided medical cover for the participants of the Kirby Way Charity Cycle 2024. The event was run to support the Jack and Jill Children's Foundation and the Children's Health Foundation.

## New Dublin Civil Defence HQ, Official Opening



**1 October 2024**

On Monday 30th September, Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, Micheál Martin TD opened the new Dublin Civil Defence Headquarters in Cherry Orchard, Dublin. The new facility will serve as a vital hub supporting it's mission to provide voluntary emergency services to communities across city and county.

## JFK 50 Mile Walk, Moylagh



**24 June 2024**

On Saturday 15th June over 40 Meath Civil Defence volunteer members were on duty at the JFK 50 Mile Walk in Moylagh, in support of Cancer Care and Research. Volunteers covered shifts throughout the day with a fleet of ambulances, logistical support vehicles, communications and medical posts. Hundreds of walkers set off at 6am from Moylagh community centre. It was a personal challenge for all who took part and a personal achievement for each one whatever distance they achieved with many doing the full 50 miles with the last walker finishing at 1.45am on Sunday morning.

# Missing Person Search, Donegal

**11 September 2024**

On Tuesday evening, 10th September, Donegal Civil Defence was tasked by An Garda Síochána to assist in the search for a missing person in the Convoy area of Donegal. A report was received by the Communications Team from a family member informing them that the missing person was an 84 year old vulnerable male.

12 members of the Civil Defence Search & Rescue team responded immediately, with the Communication Unit, Search Equipment and Drones. On



arrival, Civil Defence commenced a hasty search, on road with 4x4 vehicles, and on foot, with volunteers knocking on doors to establish if the man had called into a neighbouring house or was taking shelter in adjacent sheds.

At 7.20 pm the Civil Defence personnel located the person in a nearby shed and following examination, was transferred to Letterkenny University Hospital for further medical assistance.

## Dublin Mountain Challenge



**6 June 2024**

Dublin Civil Defence provided medical, rescue and comms support for the 42k Dublin Mountain Challenge in aid of Barrettstown on Sunday 26th May. Support was provided by the Meath Civil Defence welfare catering unit, which provided breakfast and lunch for all involved in the event.

## Medal Presentation Ceremony – Trinity College



**11 March 2024**

On Thursday 7th March Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, Micheál Martin, T.D. presented long service medals to Civil Defence members in acknowledgement of 30, 40, 50 and 60 years service.

The Tánaiste stated *"I am delighted to formally honour the long and distinguished years of service of these Civil Defence members. They have each dedicated so much of their lives to serving their communities in times of need."*

**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](http://www.civildefence.ie)**