



An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence



Policy on Civil Defence Ranks & Promotions

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Policy Owner	AP Policy, Planning & Communications
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Approved by	Cep Carty, Principal, Civil Defence Branch
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Policy Summary	The policy provides guidelines and direction for Civil Defence Units on ranks and promotions within units to ensure a consistent approach across Civil Defence
Changes made	The policy clarifies the current Civil Defence ranks structures and introduces guidance for the promotion of Volunteers

1. Purpose

This policy aims to introduce a more consistent approach to ranks and promotions across all Civil Defence Units. It aims to clarify the rank structure within Civil Defence, enabling Civil Defence Officers to stipulate clear rights and responsibilities for each rank. This policy also aims to ensure a more consistent approach to promotions, based on clear, transparent criteria and in line with the operational needs of each Unit.

2. Description

This policy provides guidance to Civil Defence Officers in their management of ranks and promotions. This policy does not relate to uniforms or insignia or broader command and control issues (a revised uniform policy is due to be issued in Q1 2026).

Current Civil Defence practices regarding ranks and promotions have been largely unchanged for decades. In the interim, there has been an increased use of local practices. This policy aims to introduce clear guidelines for ranks and promotions to ensure equivalence of duties and responsibilities for the same rank across the State, while respecting the operational autonomy and discretion of the Civil Defence Officer. This is important in the context of enabling an effective multi-unit response, which has become increasingly significant part of the Civil Defence response to severe weather and other challenges. It is also important to ensure that Civil Defence Volunteers holding rank are clear about their roles.

Similarly, a consistent set of criteria should be used by the Civil Defence Officer when considering the promotion of a Volunteer.

Any disputes in relation to ranks or promotions should be resolved in accordance with the current Civil Defence Code of Practice as set out in the Civil Defence Act 2023 (Code of Practice) Regulations 2023.

Section 1 sets out Civil Defence Policy in relation to the ranks structure.

Section 2 sets out Civil Defence Policy in relation to promotion of Volunteers.

The Civil Defence Officer should be aware that any written records relating to removal of rank or promotion of Volunteers may be subject to Freedom of Information or a Data Access request.

Section 1 - Ranks

Civil Defence currently has six distinct ranks;

- Commander
- First Officer
- Second Officer
- Third Officer
- Leader
- Assistant Leader.

There is currently an over-abundance of leadership roles for an organisation of this size with approximately one-third of all Volunteers holding rank. This is an historical legacy, based on a numerically far larger organisation designed for assisting the civilian population in wartime.

- a) Civil Defence Officers should conduct a review of ranks within 6 months of publication of this policy (if they have not previously done so within the previous 12 months) to ascertain the appropriate number and level of ranks for each unit, based on Volunteer numbers, geography and particular training. This review should also outline the most appropriate means of transitioning to the new organisational structure, if appropriate, within a specified timeline.
- b) There should be at least one Volunteer of Commander rank in each Civil Defence Unit. Commander is the highest rank attainable by a Volunteer and should be a suitably qualified senior Volunteer with a thorough knowledge of the operational capabilities of the local Unit and the skills to assist the Civil Defence Officer and Assistant Civil Defence Officer. To support this key rank, the Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence is working towards establishing a training course for Commanders, giving them an opportunity to network, benchmark and share best practices. The possibility of leadership training for other ranks will also be examined by the Civil Defence Branch.
- c) To ensure clarity for Volunteers, Civil Defence Officers should, within 6 months of the publication of this policy (if they have not already done so), draft specific roles and responsibilities for each rank. Volunteers holding rank should indicate annually, in writing, that they understand and accept the requirements of their rank. Sample Officer development goals for ranks are attached in Annex 2.
- d) All Volunteers holding rank should be reviewed annually, benchmarked against the agreed requirements of the role (A sample Agreement of Expectations form is attached at Annex 3). This should be undertaken by the Civil Defence Officer or the Assistant Civil Defence Officer. Where the Civil Defence Officer deems the Volunteer holding rank is not sufficiently committed to the requirements of the rank, the Civil Defence Officer and Volunteer should agree written targets that will demonstrate the level of commitment appropriate to the rank. If the Civil Defence Officer is not satisfied after 12 months that appropriate progress has been made,

he/she may remove the rank from the Volunteer, notifying the Volunteer in writing, with appropriate reference to the Agreement of Expectations form.

- e) Volunteers holding rank who step back from Civil Defence for a period of three months or longer due to personal or other circumstances should notify the Civil Defence Officer or Assistant Civil Defence Officer of their proposed absence and their intended return date. If operational pressures require, the Civil Defence Officer may temporarily appoint another Volunteer to that rank in an acting capacity for the period of absence.
- f) Volunteers with rank who repeatedly and continuously absent themselves from training and duties without notice or satisfactory explanation may have their rank removed at the discretion of the Civil Defence Officer. This can only occur twelve months after the Volunteer has been informed by the CDO or ACDO of the risk of losing rank and been given the opportunity to re-engage and agree written targets as in e) above.

Section 2 - Promotion

A vibrant Civil Defence Unit depends on active Volunteers in leadership roles. The promotion of Volunteers to ranks within Civil Defence needs to reward committed Volunteers but also align with the operational and organisational needs of the Unit.

The approach to promotions in Civil Defence should be;

- consistent across all units;
- according to the operational needs of the Unit;
- based on transparent criteria and;
- in line with the numerical strength of the Unit.

a) Eligibility for Promotion

Promotion of a Volunteer to a rank within Civil Defence should be on merit and confined to active Volunteers with current Minimum Training Standards (MTS). The Volunteer should also be consistently meeting or exceeding the expectations of their current rank (if any) as laid out in the Agreement of Expectations form, or – if not already holding a rank – should be demonstrating a clear commitment to duties and training.

b) Criteria for Promotion

Where the Civil Defence Officer deems it appropriate to promote an active Volunteer, he/she should do so on the basis of the following criteria;

- i) leadership capacity;
- ii) ability to work as part of a team;
- iii) satisfactory tasking attendance;
- iv) satisfactory training attendance and achievements;
- v) overall commitment to Civil Defence.

c) Promotion Process

Promotions should take place once a year, if required, unless the Civil Defence Officer judges that a key leadership role needs to be filled urgently.

It is not envisaged that Volunteers should apply or request a promotion. The Civil Defence Officer retains discretion to consider any Volunteer fulfilling the criteria outlined above in b). A sample scoring matrix is attached in Annex 4, though it is not compulsory for the CDO to use this.

A newly promoted Volunteer should agree, in writing, to adhere to the requirements of the new role, acknowledging that failure to adhere to the requirements may result in a removal of rank.

There will be a probationary period of one year from the date of promotion. This will give the Civil Defence Officer the opportunity to assess the performance of the Volunteer at the new

rank and either rescind or confirm the promotion. The Volunteer should be provided with formal and informal feedback by the CDO, ACDO or more senior ranking Volunteer during the year. Any decision to rescind a promotion should be made to the Volunteer in writing.

Annex 1 - Guidance for review of Civil Defence Ranks

1. Civil Defence Officers are required to undertake a review of ranks within their Unit within 6 months of publication of the Ranks & Promotions policy.
2. The purpose of this is to ascertain the appropriate number and level of ranks for each unit based on volunteer numbers, geography and speciality.
3. It is understood that Civil Defence in each county has unique characteristics, which will be reflected in any review.
4. This task is predominantly a desk exercise but may benefit from consultations with the ACDO, senior ranks and other CDOs, as appropriate.
5. The Civil Defence Officer should update their organisation chart, ensuring only current active Volunteers are listed.
6. Weaknesses should be identified, including active Volunteers with rank who are continuously unavailable for training and/or duties or key ranks with insufficient and/or outdated training.
7. CDOs should address key questions in the review:
 - Are certain teams underperforming?
 - Is there a lack of support among some ranks for the CDO and ACDO?
 - Are some Volunteers holding rank in name only, without a specific role?
 - Are there too many Volunteers of a specific rank?
 - Is there evidence – i.e. numerous, specific examples – of ineffective leadership among senior ranks in particular?
8. The CDO may need to restructure the Unit based on the review, to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. This may require a change to the number and level of ranks across Civil Defence. CDOs should also bear in mind the Department of Defence's target of significantly growing Volunteer numbers in the coming years.
9. The completed review may impact on one or more Volunteers with rank. Engagement should be in accordance with the Ranks & Promotion policy, including ongoing engagement with the Volunteer to address any issues.
10. It may be more appropriate to implement the outcome of a review gradually, so as not to adversely affect the operational readiness of the unit.
11. The Policy, Planning & Communications staff of the Civil Defence Branch, Department of Defence can assist with any queries.

Annex 2 – Sample Officer Development Goals for Civil Defence Ranks

This document is a guide to Civil Defence Officers indicating the type of content they could use in outlining the roles and responsibilities of Officers and Commanders, ensuring Volunteers with Rank have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

The performance of expectations detailed are subject to appraisal from the CDO/ACDO.

A review of the expectations required of each Officer/Commander should aim to take place at the start of each calendar year.

1. Expectations of a Commander

- **Planning and Development:** Create, implement, and develop plans to improve aspects of the organisation. Coordinate and cooperate with the CDO and ACDO, Commanders and other Officers to oversee the progression of the Unit.
- **Administration:** Keep appropriate records and information for training and deployment events. Work with other Commanders and Instructors, ACDO and the CDO in relation to paperwork required for the Civil Defence College and the Local Authority
- **Duties and Training:** Carry out an agreed number of duties per year, as well taking on the responsibility of Officer in Charge, when designated to do so. Keep personal certification up to date and where applicable, carry out trainings (certified and/or uncertified) with the aim of improving the Volunteers, Instructors, other Officers, and the organisation.
- **Leadership and Management:** Lead by example. Prioritise health and safety above all else. Be approachable, reliable, and helpful where possible and help create a positive social and learning environment. Coordinate resources. Delegate tasks to other Officers and Volunteers. Work with the CDO, ACDO, Officers and other Volunteers to improve the organisation going forward.
- **Availability:** Commanders are expected to be more available than any other Volunteer. Ability to attend Duties, Events, Trainings, and Meetings, as well as keeping up regular communication with the Civil Defence Officer and Assistant Civil Defence Officer is required.
- **Promotion of Organisation:** Help promote the organisation externally, through different ways, such as, marketing, attending events/meetings, developing relationships with the PRAs, etc. Internally, within the organisation, help develop an enjoyable environment and atmosphere for members to thrive in.

2. Expectations of a 1st Officer

- **Planning and Development:** Create, implement, and develop plans to improve aspects of the organisation within your power. Coordinate and cooperate with the CDO and ACDO, Commanders and other Officers to oversee the progression of the organisation.
- **Administration:** Keep appropriate records and information, in order to aid the population of the Management system. Any training course paperwork should be delivered to CDO/ACDO within one week of course completion. Work with the Commanders, ACDO and the CDO in relation to paperwork required for the Civil Defence College, as well as well helping instructors.
- **Certification and Training:** Keep personal certification up to date and where applicable, carry out trainings (certified and/or uncertified) with the aim of improving the Volunteers, Instructors, other Officers, and the organisation.
- **Leadership and Management:** Lead by example. Prioritise health and safety above all else. Be approachable, reliable, and helpful where possible and help create a positive social and learning environment. Coordinate resources. Delegate tasks to other Officers and Volunteers. Offer advice and help other officers.
- **Duties:** Carry out an agreed number of duties per year, as well taking on the responsibility of Officer in Charge, when designated to do so.
- **Responsibility of specified role:** As per the command structure, each 1st Officer is expected to be responsible for a specified role. This entails management of the specific role, which includes, but not limited to, training plans, duties, accountability, welfare of members and direction of unit for the future.

3. Expectations of a 2nd Officer

- **Communication and Cooperation:** Communicate efficiently and effectively with all Civil Defence members. Operate within the chain of command. Facilitate information passing through the command structure.
- **Administration:** Keep appropriate records and information, in order to aid the population of the Management system. Any training course paperwork should be delivered to CDO/ACDO within one week of course completion.
- **Certification and Training:** Keep personal certification up to date and where applicable, carry out trainings (certified and/or uncertified) with the aim of improving the Volunteers and the organisation.

- **Leadership:** Lead by example. Prioritise health and safety above all else. Be approachable, reliable, and helpful where possible and help create a positive social and learning environment.
- **Duties:** Carry out an agreed number of duties per year, as well taking on the responsibility of Officer in Charge, when designated to do so.
- **Management of Specific Area:** This entails management of the specified role, which includes, but not limited to, accountability for carrying out plans, equipment and training or duty requirements.

4. Expectations of a 3rd Officer

- **Communication and Cooperation:** Communicate efficiently and effectively with all Civil Defence members. Operate within the chain of command. Facilitate information passing through the command structure.
- **Reliability:** Officers are required to be more available/contactable than Volunteers, as well as to be considered dependable and trustworthy.
- **Certification and Training:** Keep personal certification up to date and where applicable, carry out trainings (certified and uncertified) with the aim of facilitating the improvement of the Volunteers and the organisation.
- **Leadership:** Lead by example. Prioritise health and safety above all else. Be approachable and helpful where possible and help create a positive social and learning environment.
- **Duties:** Carry out an agreed number of duties per year, as well taking on the responsibility of Officer in Charge, when designated to do so.
- **Defined Role:** Strive to improve any area of the organisation for which you have been given specific responsibility.

Civil Defence Officers may also wish to set expectations for their Leader and Assistant Leader ranks.

Annex 3 - Civil Defence Senior Officer – sample Agreement of Expectations

Note: This is a sample. CDOs should feel free to adapt the document as appropriate.

Name:
Rank:
Defined Role/Specialised Area:

Specific Expectations of Officer/Commander:
Expectations of CDO from Officer/Commander:
Additional Notes/Comments:

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Officer/Commander	Signature:	Date:
Civil Defence Officer:	Signature:	Date:
Asst. Civil Defence Officer:	Signature:	Date:

Annex 4 - Sample Scoring Matrix

Note: This is a sample. There is no obligation to use this in the promotion process and, if used, CDOs should feel free to adapt the document as appropriate.

PROPOSED RANK:	
DATE OF CONSIDERATION:	

VOLUNTEER NAME	<i>Leadership Capacity</i>	<i>Ability to work as part of a team</i>	<i>Satisfactory tasking attendance</i>	<i>Satisfactory training attendance and achievements</i>	<i>Overall commitment to Civil Defence</i>	TOTAL	Rank to be offered?	NOTES

Key:

4	Excellent match to criteria
3	Good match to criteria
2	Some match to criteria
0	No match to criteria