



CIVIL DEFENCE

COSAINT SHIBHIALTA



- ▶ **Storm Éowyn/ January Snow**
- ▶ **Áras Reception**
- ▶ **EU Modex Exercise**
- ▶ **Boat Operations**



**Celebrating 75 years
of Civil Defence
in Ireland**



FOREWORD



Is mór an pléisiúr dom Iris Cosanta Shibhialta na bliana seo a chur in bhur láthair agus an deis seo a thapú le labhairt go díreach libhse, na hOibrithe Deonacha, a dhéanann obair na gcapall ar son na heagraíochta iontaí seo.

Bliain ghnóthach eile a bhí in 2025 don Chosaint Shibhialta, ach bliain cheiliúrtha freisin nuair a rinneamar comóradh ar 75 bliain iontach de sheirbhís agus de bharr feabhais.

The snow and Storm Éowyn in January and February placed significant demands on Civil Defence units across the country. Time and again, Volunteers stepped up, turning out in the most difficult of conditions to assist their communities and help those in greatest need. I know all the Principle Response Agencies on the ground were extremely appreciative of Civil Service Volunteers and, at national level, your contribution was noted and commended.

Officers and Volunteers were particularly proud in May, when President Michael D. Higgins hosted Volunteers, Officers and officials in paying respect to Volunteers, both past and present, who served during the organisation's 75-year history. He commended Volunteers who give their time and energy to ensuring Civil Defence remains a critical part of the State's response to the challenges we face, be it extreme weather, missing person searches or any of the many other duties that Volunteers undertake each year.

Further events were held over the autumn in Maynooth and Cork, where all Volunteers were invited to catch up with colleagues from across the country and receive the commemorative medal to celebrate this milestone. This recognition is a small way of saying thank you, and I am grateful to my officials in the Civil Defence Branch for organising these events.

In June, my predecessor, An Tánaiste Simon Harris, officially opened the new Roscommon Civil Defence HQ, the latest in modern fit-for-purpose buildings for Civil Defence. While several similar facilities have opened in recent years across the State, I know that other Local Authorities are also working towards developing their own improved facilities and my Department will assist where it can in this process.

Since becoming Minister for Defence last November, I have had the opportunity to see your commitment and enthusiasm at first hand.

Last December, a fire in Meath Civil Defence HQ caused significant damage to its fleet and equipment, but thankfully no Volunteer was harmed. I have since visited the site, seen the progress already made and discussed plans to restore Civil Defence in Meath. It's a testament to the resourcefulness of Meath Civil Defence Officers and their Volunteers to see them bounce back from adversity and to continue to provide services in the community throughout a most difficult time.

I look forward to meeting more Volunteers in 2026. Your training and dedication ensure you are ready for whatever challenges may arise.

Civil Defence is, above all, a partnership of local and central government, of Civil Defence Officers and their Volunteers. Working together, we can continue to do great things and protect the communities we care so deeply about. Thank you for your continuing service and I wish you and your families the very best in 2026.

Helen McEntee TD
Minister for Defence



The Minister has outlined a remarkable year for Civil Defence in 2025, celebrating 75 years of unbroken service to our communities. I know Civil Defence Officers and Volunteers were immensely proud to mark the occasion and I felt the pride and celebration and selfless giving when I attended one of the Maynooth events last September.

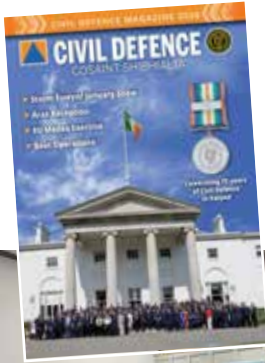
To ensure Civil Defence remains a vibrant organisation, it needs to grow, attracting new members from across our society. The social media videos filmed on a beautiful day in Wicklow last August, and released over the autumn, showcased the breadth of Civil Defence services and attracted many new Volunteers. This process needs to be sustained in the years ahead, to ensure that the national Civil Defence organisation has sufficient Volunteers with the highest standards of training to meet the challenges in the years ahead.

The goodwill of Civil Defence Volunteers is exceptional but must never be taken for granted. The Department of Defence will continue to work with local government and Civil Defence Officers across the country to provide every support to grow the service.

With best wishes and thank you,

Jacqui McCrum,
Secretary General,
Department of Defence

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Severe Weather January 2025 (Snowfall & Storm Éowyn)

In January 2025, Civil Defence Units were particularly active in response to extreme weather. During January's heavy snow, Civil Defence successfully mobilised a modern fleet of four wheeled drive vehicles funded by several years of Dormant Account Funding.

Key activities included;

- ▶ Transport of HSE patients for kidney dialysis and other critical care
- ▶ Transport of palliative care patients for treatment and transport of public health teams to patients' homes
- ▶ Welfare checks on vulnerable people in areas of heavy snowfall
- ▶ Transport of HSE staff, key local authority staff and members of An Garda Síochána

Shortly after the January snow event, Storm Éowyn placed additional demands on Civil Defence Volunteers including;

- ▶ Flying drones in support of ESB Networks to identify faults
- ▶ Supporting Community hubs with supplies (and, in some cases, opening up Civil Defence HQs as hubs)
- ▶ Transporting small generators for local use
- ▶ Performing wellness checks, delivering water and hot meals, and transporting vulnerable members of the public as appropriate.

During the snow, outgoing Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Micheál Martin paid particular thanks to Civil Defence units commenting that **"We are fortunate to have the services of such professional, experienced and willing personnel at such a demanding time for so many, especially the most vulnerable people in our communities."** In the aftermath of Storm Eowyn, then Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Simon Harris visited Monaghan Civil Defence to commend Volunteers for their efforts.



▲ Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, Simon Harris TD visited Monaghan CD HQ



▲ Kerry



▲ Clare



▲ Laois Co. Co. Control Centre



▲ Longford, delivering water to household



▲ Limerick



Uachtaráin na hÉireann marks 75 years of Civil Defence in Ireland

On Thursday 8 May 2025, President Michael D. Higgins hosted officers and volunteers from Civil Defence units across the country to mark 75 years of Civil Defence in Ireland.

The President paid tribute to decades of service by Civil Defence Volunteers stating;

"Sabina and I are delighted to mark 75 years since the establishment of the Civil Defence.

Whether it be through its service in medical response, search and rescue, emergency response, radiation monitoring, or community assistance, the Civil Defence volunteers have shown, time and again, their dedication and response capability in support of the emergency services and local communities.

I take this opportunity to commend all members, past and present, for this work and for their spirit of volunteerism, giving back to their local community and indeed to wider society."



▲ Guests enjoying refreshments in company of President Higgins



▲ President Higgins addressing the guests



▲ President Higgins with event guests



▲ *Dublin Officers and Dublin Volunteers with Minister James Lawless TD and Local Dignitaries*

75th Anniversary Commemorations - Maynooth

On Saturday 20th September the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, James Lawless TD, presented commemorative medals to over 300 Volunteers from nine counties at Maynooth University.

Speaking at the event in Maynooth, Minister Lawless said:

"I am honoured to commemorate 75 years of Civil Defence in Ireland, a proud tradition of service, resilience, and community spirit. From its foundation in 1950 to its vital role today, Civil Defence has consistently adapted to meet the needs of the Irish people.

"Last May, I announced Research Ireland funding for the Defence Innovation Challenge, which included Civil Defence through its search and rescue role. It demonstrated how this organisation continues to embrace innovation while remaining true to its core ethos of service."



▲ *Laois Civil Defence Officer and Volunteers with Minister James Lawless TD*



▲ *Clare Officers and Clare Volunteers with Minister of State Jerry Buttimer TD and Clare Chief Fire Officer*

75th Anniversary Event, Maynooth – 27 September

On Saturday 27th September the Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and at the Department of Defence, Thomas Byrne TD, presented commemorative medals to 270 Volunteers from eleven counties at the second regional event in Maynooth University.

Minister Byrne stated *"Today, we are not only commemorating an anniversary – we are celebrating a legacy of service, the thousands of lives touched, and the countless acts of selflessness carried out by volunteers over three-quarters of a century"*.



▲ *Monaghan Officers and Volunteers with Minister Thomas Byrne, Secretary General Jacqui McCrum and Principal Officer Cep Carty*

75th Commemoration – UCC Cork

On Saturday 11th October the Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht and at the Department of Transport, Jerry Buttimer TD, presented commemorative medals to over 210 Volunteers from eight counties at University College Cork. Speaking at the event in UCC, Minister Buttimer said:

“It is both an honour and a privilege to join you today to commemorate a truly remarkable milestone - 75 years of Civil Defence in Ireland. Seventy-five years ago, early in the nuclear age, Ireland saw the need for an organisation dedicated to preparedness, resilience, and community service.

From those early beginnings in 1950, Civil Defence has grown into the remarkable, nationwide volunteer organisation we know today”.



▲ Cork West Officers and Cork West Volunteers with Minister of State Jerry Buttimer TD and Local Dignitary



▲ Tipperary Officers and Tipperary Volunteers with Minister of State Jerry Buttimer TD and Local Dignitaries



▲ Cork City Officers and Cork City Volunteers with Minister of State Jerry Buttimer TD and Local Dignitaries



▲ Waterford Volunteers with Minister of State Jerry Buttimer TD and Local Dignitaries

OUR PEOPLE

Civil Defence welcomed two new personnel to the Civil Defence Officer (CDO) role and five new personnel to the Assistant Civil Defence Officer (ACDO) role during the course of 2025.

Gerard Doyle replaced the retired Pádraig Cahill as Acting Civil Defence Officer in Carlow while Carmel Prior replaced the retired John Maguire as Civil Defence Officer in Cavan. Assistant Civil Defence Officers were appointed to Cork North & East, Acting (Teresa Street), Kilkenny (Páraic Kelly), Leitrim, Acting (Antonia Irwin), Louth (Shane O'Hanlon) and Waterford (Thomas Durney).



▲ Antonia Irwin, Leitrim



▲ Carmel Prior, Cavan



▲ Gerard Doyle, Carlow



▲ Páraic Kelly, Kilkenny



▲ Shane O'Hanlon, Louth



▲ Teresa Street, Cork North & East



▲ Thomas Durney, Waterford

Civil Defence Volunteer Gerry Atkinson was a double award winner in 2025. After picking up a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Monaghan Volunteers Awards, Gerry also collected a winner's trophy under the Safety and Emergency Services category at the national Volunteer Ireland Awards.

For almost four decades, Gerry Atkinson has had an extraordinary and measurable impact on his community through his service with Civil Defence, the Annyalla/ Cremartin Community First Responders Group, and Cremartin GAA. Gerry has literally helped to save lives as he is often the first person on scene at medical emergencies. His rapid intervention, expert care, and reassuring presence have prevented tragedies and brought comfort to families in their darkest moments. Many local people owe their recovery to the fact that Gerry arrived quickly and calmly.



Roscommon – New HQ



▲ The new Roscommon HQ.
▼ New HQ Opening Ceremony with Tánaiste, Simon Harris

It was the beginning of a new chapter for all in Roscommon Civil Defence on Friday 11th April. Roscommon Civil Defence were honoured to have Mr. Simon Harris TD, An Tánaiste and Minister for Defence to officially open their new Headquarters and Training Centre. This new facility will further enhance the Units' training and response capabilities.



2025 Around The Country



▲ Galway MEM Exercise



▲ Cavan Rugby at Breffni Park



▲ Louth Poc Fada



▲ Donegal Cultural Diversity Day

Civil Defence: A busy 2025

Civil Defence Activities:

From 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025 Civil Defence volunteers completed **3,470** taskings.

Taskings were undertaken as follows:



Vehicle and Boat Fleets Grant Aid:



Grant-Aid totalling **€461,663**

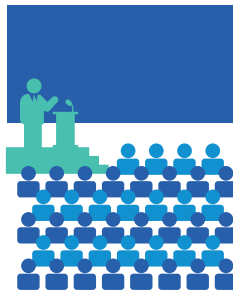
was paid to Local Authorities towards the upgrade of the Civil Defence vehicle and boat fleets.

College Training:

A total of **611** training courses were completed.



3,798 Certificates issued.



***4,265** Volunteer members received training.

Instructor and Responder Training was conducted in the following disciplines:



This represents a point in time statistic for volunteer training per the Volunteer & Equipment Management System - there are other courses and seminars that bring the total numbers trained to over 4,800



An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

2025 Around The Country



▲ Hunter Family Cork N&E - 100 Years Combined Service



▲ Sligo, Just One Life event



▲ Dublin Christmas Delivery to Old Folks Home



▲ Wexford Fleadh Cheoil



▲ Laois & Offaly Interagency Training, Slieve Blooms'

Promoting Civil Defence online



On Saturday 20th September, Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, Simon Harris launched a new nationwide campaign urging people to join the Civil Defence.

The recruitment campaign highlights the many benefits of being involved in the Civil Defence, which include the learning of essential skills that can save lives.

The Department of Defence ran a social media and radio campaign targeted at raising the profile of Civil Defence with a view to attracting and recruiting new Volunteers.

The campaign featured volunteers from Wicklow, Kildare and Meath demonstrating key skills essential to Civil Defence duties – including medical response, catering, drone piloting, land and water search.

The aim is to increase the number of Civil Defence volunteers to ensure it can support communities and principal response agencies during local events across the State and in emergency response.

Launching the campaign, The Tánaiste, Simon Harris, said:

“Our Civil Defence personnel go to the heart of what volunteerism is all about – supporting communities and helping people in need.

We saw first-hand that sense of dedication earlier this year in the aftermath of Storm Éowyn, when our volunteers played a leading role in the State’s response.

Today, I’m delighted to launch a new nationwide campaign aimed at recruiting more women and men into the Civil Defence”.



Annual Missing Persons Seminar

The 2025 annual Missing Person Search Seminar was held in November with over 100 participants. It was a day of learning designed to strengthen capability, share operational insights, and continue building a consistent national approach to search.

From the outset, the seminar struck a balance: practical, experience-led content delivered in a positive atmosphere, with plenty of space for discussion. It also offered an important reminder of the scale of volunteer contribution.

For volunteers, this evolving picture underlines the need for continuous learning, careful search strategies, and a steady focus on systematic search practices.

“Same but Different”: decision-making in real searches

The opening presentation, delivered by Michelle Colclough, Kilkenny CDO, set a strong tone with the theme “Same but Different”—a thoughtful exploration of how search decisions are made, evaluated and revised as information develops. The key point was straightforward but important: while the principles of search remain consistent, no two incidents are identical. Terrain, weather, available resources, witness information, and time elapsed can shift quickly.

Drones, observation, and the value of the second check

The second session, delivered by Steven Hayes, Clare CDO, and Volunteer Danny O'Connor, looked at drone operations, observation challenges, and “perception of size” in landscape environments. The presentation also highlighted the importance of supporting roles—particularly the “No. 2” function that many teams rely on: someone who provides cross-checking, maintains situational awareness, and helps reduce error when search mission and pressures increase.

The session emphasised that technology is now viewed as a central pillar of modern search support, not an optional extra.

Bodies in water, sonar, and operational planning

After lunch, Sgt. Lorna Dennison Wilkins, Search Advisor with Surrey and Essex Police, joined via TEAMS, focusing on research and operational learning relating to how bodies behave in water and the implications for water search strategy and sonar use.



Research and innovation: building capability through partnership

The final presentation, delivered by Boris Galkin of the Tyndall National Institute, looked at research into wireless signal detection for search and rescue missions.

The key takeaway was the practical potential of collaboration between volunteers and research organisations: technology

development grounded in real operational needs, tested in realistic conditions, and aimed at improving outcomes.

The sense was not that technology replaces traditional skills, but that innovation—when used carefully—can expand the range of tools available to teams, improve decision-making and help focus effort where it is most likely to succeed.

What attendees thought:

- ▶ Experience-based learning matters most. Real case studies were identified as the strongest learning mechanism. Attendees valued practical detail and honest reflection.
- ▶ Technology is a priority. There was strong interest in drones, sonar, and enhanced camera capability.
- ▶ Interagency alignment should be strengthened; particularly around expectations at call-outs, early communications, coordination, and clarity on handover and reporting.
- ▶ Core search skills remain essential. Volunteers recognised the continuing importance of fundamentals such as search theory, mapping, probability-based planning, terrain considerations and disciplined decision-making.
- ▶ Consistency and professionalism are valued. Attention to standards, governance, and appropriate handling of information were noted.

The last word....

Sincere thanks are due to all who travelled, often long distances, to attend, participate and share learning, in particular the speakers—Michelle Colclough, Steven Hayes, Danny O'Connor, Sgt. Lorna Wilkins, and Boris Galkin—for giving their time and expertise in support of volunteers nationwide.

Our next Search Seminar is in November 2027; check out VEMS for details.

EU Modex Exercise – Wicklow

On Thursday 26th March 2025, Civil Defence Volunteers from Dublin, Meath, Wicklow and Kildare units participated in Ireland's first EU Civil Protection Mechanism Modex training exercise in Wicklow. The large scale event simulated a wildfire near Turlough Hill, bringing together over 100 responders from Ireland and across Europe to test emergency preparedness.

Civil Defence participation included,

- ▶ Wicklow drones used to provide real-time information to decision makers
- ▶ Wicklow and Kildare ACDOs staffed the On Site Co-Ordination Centre with the other PRAs. One vital task here was maintaining air safety as drones and helicopters were alternating their presence in the skies.
- ▶ Kildare and Meath cooked a very welcome and tasty hot meal for the Fire Service and Civil Defence personnel in a breezy mountain car park.
- ▶ Dublin set up a Body Holding Facility in Wicklow Town and Evacuation Rest Centre in Roundwood and gave a briefing to the visiting European teams.

Civil Defence Officers, Volunteers and Branch staff, put a lot of hours into the preparation of this exercise which resulted in a very professional performance.

Well done to all involved.



▲ Modex Exercise Site



▲ Drone Team



▲ Drones Operation



▲ Control Centre



◀ *Communications*

▼ *Civil Defence Fleet*



Critical Communications Mayo – September 2025

In collaboration with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), Civil Defence participated in testing a new Mission Critical Communications (MCX) system in Westport, Mayo. The technology platform was developed as part of Project 2.5, an initiative in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

The MCX weeklong event culminated in the Government’s unveiling of the groundbreaking communications platform for Ireland’s Emergency services which, in effect, will be a system of last resort for emergency communications. The unveiling of the Mission Critical Communications System was made during a high-profile event in Westport attended by Minister Jack Chambers, Minister Dara Calleary and Minister of State Emer Higgins, alongside European Public Protection and Disaster Relief agencies, technology leaders and representatives from the European Commission.



◀ *Command & Control Unit*

▼ *Drone Operation*



Boat Ops – Raising the Standard

A new era of training in Civil Defence Boat Operations

Civil Defence boat operations are undergoing one of the most significant training reforms in their history, following an independent national review conducted by Sea Training International Ltd.

The review identified a clear strength across the organisation: committed, motivated volunteers who take immense pride in their work. However, it also highlighted inconsistencies in training standards between units. The path forward was clear — introduce a nationally standardised, role-specific training framework to ensure every volunteer operates to the same high level of competence and safety.

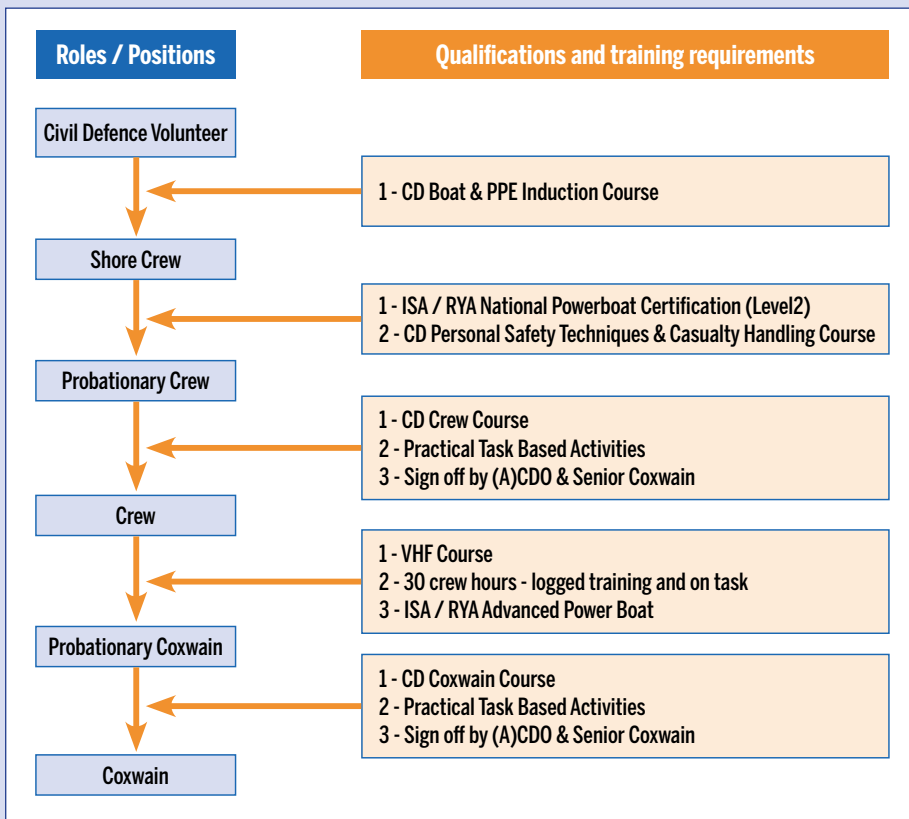
A structured national training pathway

At the heart of the reform programme is a defined progression model that provides clarity, accountability and measurable competence at every stage. Each stage includes specific training requirements, logged experience, practical assessments and formal sign-off by senior leadership. This ensures that progression is earned through demonstrated ability, not just time served.

The new training pathway consists of eight different courses depending on the level a volunteer wishes to gain. Three of these levels are National / Regulatory Certification (VHF, ISA National and ISA Advanced Powerboat). Five of the levels will be CD bespoke courses (Boat & PPE Induction, PST & Casualty Handling, Crew, Coxswain and Sonar Operator). Volunteers will now move through a structured pathway and this blended approach aligns Civil Defence with industry best practice while retaining a focus on operational realism.

Training for real-world scenarios

A defining feature of the new programme is its emphasis on practical, scenario-based learning. Courses are designed to reflect the realities crews may face on inland waterways and inshore coastal environments.



▲ Training Pathways

Personal Safety Techniques (PST) & Casualty Handling training has received particularly strong feedback. Volunteers described the training as physically demanding, confidence-building and “absolutely essential” for every crew member. Many reported leaving the course more competent, reassured and prepared to operate safely in challenging conditions. This focus on realism not only builds skill, but it builds trust within teams and confidence in leadership.

nationwide. Over 330 volunteers will undergo various levels of training in the coming years, covering regulatory certifications, operational boat handling, safety, casualty care and command responsibilities.

Importantly, training reform is not a once-off initiative. It is embedded within the new Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs), supported by centralised oversight, inspection cycles and formal documentation systems. Training, governance and operational practice are



▲ **Pyrotechnics training on the Personal Safety Techniques and Casualty Recovery course**

A national rollout of training

Between May and December 2025, new training provision has been actively delivered across multiple counties. 2026 will see more training delivered



▲ **Capsize drill on the Personal Safety Techniques**

now aligned under a single national framework.

Fleet Renewal and Investment

Fleet condition and age has also been a major focus. In 2023, 63% of Civil Defence boats were over 16 years old. By the end of 2025, significant progress has been made, with the proportion of boats over 16 years reduced from 63% to 40%, and one third of the fleet is now less than five years old. Recent replacements demonstrate tangible progress in modernising the fleet, improving safety standards and aligning equipment nationally.

An array of new PPE and Equipment for Boat Operations has also been provided under Civil Defence funded central procurement. Drysuits, Lifejackets, Straps and Recovery Cradles will also improve volunteer safety when responding, particularly with the recovery of bodies of water.



▲ **New Clare Zodiac Inflatable**

Moving Forward Together

The publication of new Standard Operating Guidelines in 2026 will mark a critical milestone in achieving consistent national standards. Training, governance and operational practice will be aligned under a single national framework. Combined with enhanced training, structured inspections, centralised procurement and stronger governance, Civil Defence boating operations is transitioning from locally varied systems to a unified national capability.

The dedication of volunteers remains the organisation’s greatest strength. With clearer standards, improved equipment and a defined pathway for development, Civil Defence boat crews will be better positioned than ever to deliver safe, professional and reliable service to communities nationwide.

Food Safety & Rest Centre Training

Food Safety Training:

In 2025 the rollout of various levels of Food Safety training was delivered across all units both locally and centrally:

Food Safety Level 1 Instructor: Two courses were delivered in 2025 to increase the number of Food Safety Instructors nationwide.

Food Safety Level 1 Operative: Civil Defence instructors are delivering these courses on an ongoing basis locally and regionally, and the aim is to continue to increase the numbers trained in each unit.

Primary Course in Food Safety

Level 2: this is a new course introduced which is accredited by the Environmental Health Association of Ireland for all Volunteers prepping and cooking food, to ensure they are qualified to the required standard. This course has been greatly received by everyone that has attended and is a great addition to the Food Safety training. Five courses at this level were delivered in 2025.

Management of Food Safety

Level 3: this is another new course introduced, also accredited by the Environmental Health Association of



▲ Lunch Time Queue

Ireland, which will train Volunteers to a supervisory role in each unit that has a mobile catering unit or industrial kitchen. The rollout of this course commenced in December 2025 and continued until March 2026.

The delivery of the courses allows the Mobile Catering Units to once again be deployed to events and duties. At the Modex exercise in Wicklow in March, Kildare Civil Defence and Meath Civil Defence joined forces to

provide hot meals for up to 100 people. Everyone was delighted to be handed a hot meal and refreshments on the day. It was greatly appreciated and praised by all.

A Standard Operating Guideline and Policy are in the final stages of development with the assistance of Civil Defence Officers, Patricia McNeela, Emma Reid and Dolores Fahey.

Rest Centre/Evacuation Centre Training:

Rest Centre Training:

In response to the increasing number of weather events and the requirement for Civil Defence to assist the Local Authority with the setting up of rest centres, Civil Defence Branch organised Team Lead training in rest/evacuation centres for each unit. The Branch also commenced the purchase of key equipment. This assists with the standardisation of training and equipment across the country.

In 2025 rest and evacuation centre team lead training was rolled out to most units, with the assistance of Dublin ACDO Aiden Hanna and his team. This was delivered over 3 weekends in both Dublin Civil Defence and Clare Civil Defence.



▲ Evacuation Centre Training Attendees

These team leads will in turn train a team of 8-10 Volunteers in their CD Unit in the setting up of a rest centre and how to use the equipment.

As part of this a Standard Operating Guideline and Policy was developed with the assistance of CDOs Dolores Fahey, Emma Reid and Aiden Hanna. This SOG includes standardised risk assessments, registration forms,

checklists etc to assist each unit with this process.

In November an Evacuation Centre exercise was hosted by Roscommon Civil Defence, whereby the team leads had the chance to put their training into practice, while others together with the CDOs/ACDOs played the role of evacuees. As part of the exercise the Local Authority Housing Section, Gardaí & Fire Service were also involved in the exercise.