



Civil Defence – Towards 2030

“Volunteers serving the community”

1. Role of Civil Defence

Civil Defence (*Cosaint Shibhialta*) is a statutory volunteer-based organisation with a nationwide footprint, established in 1951. In central Government terms, responsibility for the organisation falls under the aegis of the Department of Defence. Nationally, Civil Defence is managed by 35 Local Authority Civil Defence Officers and has approximately 3,500 volunteers. The Civil Defence organisation is dependent on the volunteers giving freely of their time and expertise.

Volunteering within Civil Defence demonstrates the very best of Irish society and the Government is conscious of and grateful for the work that Civil Defence volunteers undertake on a weekly basis. As set out in the 2015 Government White Paper on Defence the volunteer ethos of Civil Defence is a hallmark of great pride and one which the Government wishes to cherish and support into the future. The Government’s continued commitment to the development of Civil Defence is confirmed in the White Paper.

The White Paper also states that the future of Civil Defence will continue to be developed around its central strategic objective of supporting the Principal Response Agencies in a variety of emergency and non-emergency situations.

Civil Defence has a very positive relationship with the Principal Response Agencies. Emergency support is provided as required and where possible to the agencies and in that context Civil Defence has a very clear role in the Framework for Major Emergency Management. In addition, over the years Civil Defence volunteers have been utilised in a variety of community support roles at local level. Where resources permit and with the agreement of the Local Authority, Civil Defence will continue to support appropriate community events.

2. Role and Responsibility of the Department of Defence

Civil Defence policy is set down by the Minister for Defence through the Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence. The Department is also responsible for the strategic management and development of Civil Defence at national level. As well as providing a maximum of 70% grant aid, the Department provides other supports to local Civil Defence units such as central training for local instructors in a “train the trainer” system through the Civil Defence College in Roscrea. The Department also supplies vehicles, equipment, uniforms and personal protective equipment for Civil Defence volunteers.

3. Role and Responsibility of the Local Authority

The Local Authority has overall responsibility for the day to day operations within their respective Local Authority. The key person within the Local Authority in the context of Civil Defence is the Civil Defence Officer. In some counties, s/he is supported by one or more Assistant Civil Defence Officers. The Civil Defence Officer is a full time employee of the Local Authority.





The Civil Defence Officer's role is to deliver on Civil Defence policy and administer Civil Defence services in the Local Authority. They are responsible for recruiting, organising and managing volunteers and for ensuring that they are appropriately trained. They also represent Civil Defence on local emergency planning structures and develop strong relationships with key local personnel within the Principal Response Agencies.

4. Civil Defence Core Services

The five core services of Civil Defence going forward are:

- a. Provision of trained personnel and equipment to assist in response to emergencies, hereafter referred to as **"Emergency Response"**,
- b. Provision of trained personnel and equipment to assist in search and rescue for missing persons hereafter referred to as **"Search and Rescue"**,
- c. Provision of pre-hospital medical service personnel, hereafter referred to as **"Medical Response"**,
- d. Provision of trained personnel and equipment in the context of **"Community Assistance"**, and
- e. Provision of a **"Radiation Monitoring Service"**.

Every Local Authority Civil Defence unit should have trained personnel and equipment to allow them undertake each of the five core services which are explained further below. The provision of any of these core services is dependent on the availability of appropriately trained volunteers in Local Authorities.

Operational supports including drones, mapping, sonar, search dogs, welfare and communications are discussed in section 6, but may be used across all five core services.

A. Emergency Response

Civil Defence's Emergency Response will support the Principal Response Agencies in times of emergencies. Roles undertaken here may include:

- roles set out for Civil Defence within each respective Local Authority Major Emergency Plan,
- supporting the Local Authority in times of flooding through Civil Defence AFS units and Swiftwater teams,
- supporting the Principal Response Agencies – Local Authorities, HSE and An Garda Síochána in providing emergency response including severe weather events,
- supporting the Local Authority by transporting displaced persons from their homes to designated Local Authority rest centres. As set out in MEM Guide 6, the Local Authority is responsible for staffing rest centres and registering affected persons. Civil Defence may assist, if requested by the Local Authority. Separately Civil Defence may identify suitable rest centres in advance of an emergency, if requested by the Local Authority.
- providing assistance and backup to Principal Response Agencies in line with Memorandums of Understanding and Liaison Agreements.





While Civil Defence may also be requested to undertake other activities by organisations including the Principal Response Agencies represented on the National Emergency Co-Ordination Group that is dependent on the availability of appropriately trained volunteers within Local Authorities.

B. Search and Rescue

Civil Defence will continue to support and assist An Garda Síochána in this area. The Department of Defence will certify Search Managers and Instructors to provide trained personnel as Search Responders and Search Team Leaders.

C. Medical Response

Civil Defence will continue to provide a Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) licenced emergency medical service. The Department of Defence will continue to certify instructors for Cardiac First Response, First Aid Response and Emergency First Response. The Department of Defence will also continue to manage the delivery of Emergency Medical Technician courses where such courses are required. Certification and re-certification will be in compliance with PHECC standards.

D. Community Assistance

While emergency support is the priority task of Civil Defence, by their nature such events are not regular. In that context, community events allow volunteers practice their skills, raise the profile of the organisation and may attract new volunteers. Volunteers enjoy and take pride in contributing to events within their own local community. Where resources permit, Civil Defence will continue to support appropriate community events. Preference will be given to local authority, charitable and not for profit events. Civil Defence support for community events can take many forms, including the provision of medical cover and safety boat cover. If Civil Defence is providing other forms of “Community Assistance”, the Local Authority should ensure that volunteers are appropriately trained.

E. Radiation Monitoring Service

One of the central pillars of Civil Defence since its establishment in 1951, has been radiation monitoring. In 2015, the Department of Defence and the Environmental Protection Agency, consolidated the role of Civil Defence to the measurement of background gamma radiation and the sampling of soil and grass to supplement the automatic recording stations located throughout the State. An annual mobilisation exercise in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency will be run.

Support provided by the Department of Defence, in terms of funding and training, will focus on these five core services.

5. Training

The Department of Defence will continue to provide training to national and international standards for Civil Defence personnel which supports the delivery of the five core services. This will include the operational support areas of, driver training, drones, sonar mapping, rope rescue, search dogs, manual handling, people handling, welfare and communications.





The Department of Defence will report annually on the number of Civil Defence volunteers who meet the minimum training standard. This standard will be reviewed periodically by the Department of Defence and Local Authorities.

The Department of Defence will continue to certify and quality assure volunteers as instructors across a range of areas which support the five core services.

6. Civil Defence Operational Supports

The Department of Defence will continue to purchase equipment that assists Civil Defence Units deliver the five core services. It will also provide a financial contribution where available, to allow Local Authorities to procure Civil Defence equipment.

As all Civil Defence vehicles and equipment are centrally insured by the Department of Defence, the Department will establish, in consultation with Local Authorities, an appropriate fleet size for Civil Defence.

Civil Defence has a well-developed radio communications system. It operates on a national, regional and local level. Civil Defence will continue to maintain and enhance its communication network where necessary. A strong and resilient communications infrastructure is a key Civil Defence asset when supporting the Principal Response Agencies.

Civil Defence's boating operations in both the emergency and community area, will continue and will be undertaken in accordance with the 2019 Standard Operating Guidelines for Boating Operations.

Drones, sonar, mapping and search dogs will continue to be supported technically and financially by the Department of Defence as key operational supports.

Local Authorities will continue to look after the welfare of their volunteers by ensuring they receive food, water and refreshments while on Civil Defence duties.

7. Local Authority Crisis Management Teams

As the Civil Defence service is a Local Authority service, provision should be made in each Local Authority Major Emergency Plan for the inclusion of Civil Defence resources. In addition, provision should be made to appoint the Civil Defence Officer to their respective Local Authority's Crisis Management Teams to ensure effective prioritisation, coordination and utilisation of Civil Defence during emergencies.

8. Local Authorities Civil Defence Units undertaking other Activities

If individual Local Authorities wish to undertake activities other than those within the five core services, they should ensure that they have undertaken risk assessments, have appropriate policies in place and that relevant training has been provided. Details of such additional activities should be set out within the Local Authority Civil Defence Plan as required by the Civil Defence Act, 2012.





The Local Authority must consult with the Department of Defence before undertaking such activities to ensure that they are covered by Civil Defence insurance and are in line with the role set out for Civil Defence within the 2015 Government White Paper on Defence.

9. Review and Implementation of Towards 2030

An implementation plan to deliver “Towards 2030” will be drafted, monitored and reviewed through a number of fora;

- a. The Department of Defence will proactively convene the Inter Agency Guidance Team at least twice per year to continue to ensure Civil Defence services and capabilities are developed to meet the needs of the Principal Response Agencies. The Inter Agency Guidance Team will also ensure that Civil Defence’s core services remain relevant to changing needs at national, regional and local level.
- b. The Department of Defence will also meet at least twice per year with the relevant sub-committee of the County and City Management Association to review implementation of “Towards 2030” and any other Civil Defence related matters.
- c. The Department of Defence will meet with representatives of Local Authority Civil Defence Officers four times a year. It will continue to meet and work closely with and support all Local Authority Civil Defence Officers, Assistant Civil Defence Officers and volunteers.

Memorandums of Understanding and Liaison Agreements will be drafted and updated with the Principal Response Agencies so that there is clarity as to what is expected of Civil Defence. Consultation will take place with all stakeholders including Local Authority Civil Defence Officers in the drafting of these documents.

ENDs

