Press Release

Press Release on Civil Defence in the context of COVID-19

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Civil Defence (Cosaint Shibhialta) is a statutory volunteer-based organisation established in the 1950s. Nationally, Civil Defence is managed by 35 Local Authority Civil Defence Officers with a membership of approximately 3,500 volunteers.

These volunteers give their time and talents freely to support their community on a weekly basis. All volunteers are over 18 years of age, are Garda vetted and trained in a range of disciplines.

The Minister with responsibility for Defence Paul Kehoe T.D, stated "the role of Civil Defence as set out in the 2015 Government White Paper on Defence is to support the Principal Response Agencies in both emergency and non-emergency events".

COVID-19 is one such emergency.

In the context of this public health emergency and the medical capability of Civil Defence volunteers who are trained to Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) standards, the Minister stated "my officials are engaging with the Health Service Executive and National Ambulance Service to see how best Civil Defence can assist them at this time".

Local Authorities have 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. The Department of Defence is working closely with Civil Defence Officers and their volunteers who deliver Civil Defence services on a local basis. "Without volunteers, there would be no Civil Defence", the Minister stated.

The Minister further stated "Volunteering within Civil Defence demonstrates the very best of Irish society and I and the Government are conscious and grateful for the work that Civil Defence volunteers put in on a weekly basis".

To date Civil Defence has been tasked by the Health Service Executive in counties Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath to transport COVID-19 samples for testing. Volunteers in Cork and Kerry will also be transporting HSE clinicians for community testing. The volume and spread of taskings will increase over the coming days and weeks.

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