

MEATH AND CARLOW FINISH IN TOP TEN

Fire and rescue teams from Meath and Carlow displayed their skills in road traffic collisions and trauma emergencies with distinction to finish in the top ten at this year's World Rescue Challenge in Romania, where over 70 teams of firefighters and rescue personnel competed in this international challenge event. Report by Grace Heneghan.

The World Rescue Challenge is the largest event of its kind in the world that focuses on promoting and improving the training and skills of emergency services personnel in dealing with road traffic collisions and medical trauma emergencies.

Over 70 teams of international firefighters and rescue personnel who participated in this year's World Rescue Challenge (WRC) were assessed to a set-marking format by international judges in Targu Mures, Romania (30 August-3 September).

Fire and rescue teams from Meath, Carlow, Wicklow and Laois, as well as a team from The Garda College, Templemore, represented Ireland on the international stage following their performances at the Irish Emergency Services National Rescue Challenge in Navan Fire Station in May.

COMPETING WITH THE BEST

"Over the last number of years, the Irish contingent has displayed that they can compete with the best. Stalwarts like Carlow and Meath have been placed in the top ten consistently and have



WRC focuses on promoting and improving the training and skills of emergency services personnel in dealing with road traffic collisions and medical trauma emergencies.



Back Row (l-r): Adrian Caldwell (Trim), Alan Campbell (Navan), Alan Egan (Dunshaughlin), Pádraig Ó Longaigh (Navan HQ), Paul Colleran (Oldcastle), David Treanor (Navan), Liam Caffrey (Ashbourne). Front: Ciaran Finn (Ashbourne) and Owen McEvoy (Ashbourne).

been also joined by Laois County FRS in the elite category. Meath County took the third place position this year, with Carlow once again joining the top ten tier," noted WRO Treasurer Declan Cassidy, Meath County Fire & Rescue Service.

"Newcomers to the Road Traffic Collision (RTC) challenge were Wicklow County Fire & Rescue Service. This fledgling team showed they could put it up to the rest of them with a top ten finish in the 'Complex Trauma Scenario', which is no mean feat!

"The RTC Challenge was equally matched with impressive displays in trauma by newcomers An Garda Síochána, Laois and once again the Carlow and Meath participants. It is also worth noting that the Incident Commander (IC) role has been represented over the last number of years by John Comerford, Andrew Hickey [both Carlow] and Paul Colleran [Meath] – with finishes in the top three. Paul Colleran achieved joint first at this year's WRC, and second overall on a count back."

TOP THREE FOR MEATH

This is the seventh year that Meath Fire & Rescue Service has competed in this event and it has really helped all those who have taken part in the past, according to team manager Pádraig Ó Longaigh, Acting Chief Fire Officer of Meath Fire & Rescue Service.

"This is the second time in three years that a Meath fire service team has been placed in the top three of this prestigious event and it is a testament to the firefighters' dedication,



Carlow team members (l-r): Dermot Scully, Andrew Fisher, Darren Somers, Alan Owens, Paul Curran and John Comerford, Incident Commander.

commitment, knowledge and training,

“For Meath Fire & Rescue Service it was an opportunity to experience and see the most innovative and practical international training methods and techniques in use today, and to bring this knowledge back with them to Ireland,” he noted.

“The Meath teams have performed exceptionally well over the years. Other Meath firefighters also took part in an official capacity for the event, assessing and organising, and this too ensures that vital training skills are brought back and will be included in the training programme for our stations.”

Ó Longaigh said that overall it was a great achievement by the Irish teams attending. “Third place for us is a fantastic achievement for a team from a retained service, when you consider there were so many full-time and military fire crews attending, and some large fire services represented, such as Barcelona, Madrid, Lisbon, Prague, Cape Town, Miami, Cairns and Sao Paolo. Also, last year three new recruits joined the Meath team, replacing some seasoned members, so that makes it all the more special to finish up in the top three.”

SKILLS AND COMMITMENT

He claimed that the key to the success of this team was probably several-fold. “There’s a great sense of loyalty and commitment in



Over 70 teams of international firefighters and rescue personnel participated in this year’s challenge.

IRELAND COMPETES ON INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Meath, Carlow, Laois, Wicklow and the Garda Team competed against the top fire and emergency services teams from the following countries:

- USA
- Canada
- Brazil
- Columbia
- Argentina
- Portugal
- Spain
- Luxembourg
- Wales
- England
- France
- Switzerland
- Romania
- Germany
- Austria
- The Czech Republic
- South Africa
- New Zealand
- Australia



The Garda Team finished 10th in the Complex Trauma Scenario, and are the first-ever team to represent An Garda Síochána at the WRC and were the only police team at this year’s challenge.

all of the team members – they want to improve their skills and performance, and were prepared to put in the time and effort to do that.

“This year we had a pool of 10 firefighters training together every Saturday, and they all drove each other on. The RTC team is made up of six so we made two teams of 6 from the 10, two of the lads taking on different roles over the two teams. It created a healthy rivalry between both teams and a great learning platform from which all benefitted.

“Meath’s IC Paul Colleran has been involved since the start of our involvement eight years ago, and his experience and knowledge has been invaluable to the newer enthusiastic members of the group. He commands great respect amongst the team and has been consistently ranked in the top tier of incident commanders at challenge events – he was joint first in this year’s world event!

“There is a good mix of new, relatively experienced and very experienced firefighters in the group. Information, learning and experience cascades down through everybody.

“Outside of the training days, the firefighters also spent time researching and discussing various aspects of car design to improve their knowledge.”

CARLOW NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Current national champions Carlow Fire & Rescue Service did themselves, Carlow and Ireland proud in this year’s WRC by finishing in seventh position in the overall team event, while the medical team finished fifth in their category, according to Paul Curran, Carlow Fire & Rescue Extrication Team.

As Curran explained, Carlow’s Technical Rescue Team was one of 36 international teams to compete in this year’s event, which consisted of three different scenarios with marks awarded for each one and combined to give the overall placing:

- A 30-minute Complex Rescue with 2 live casualties
- A 20-minute Standard Rescue with 1 live casualty
- A 10-minute Rapid Rescue with 1 live casualty

The team consisted of IC and Station Officer John Comerford (Carlow), Driver/Mechanic Paul Curran – Medic (Carlow), Firefighter Alan Owens (Carlow), Driver/Mechanic Darren Somers (Tullow), Firefighter Dermot Scully – Medic (Carlow) and Firefighter Andrew Fisher (Bagenalstown).

“All of the Irish teams performed to the best of their ability during the four-day event in what was considered by all to be a tough challenge. The event used new cars sponsored by Renault International, so teams were working with the latest new car technology available, noted Curran.

“Dealing with new cars was an eye-opening experience in comparison to working and training on cars dating from the early 2000s. These 2017 cars protect the casualty in a collision but it is far more complex to gain access to them and cut the car away from the areas of entrapment.

“Increased structural protection around the car makes it more difficult to gain access to the occupant. Well-sealed doors and reinforced windows in the cars make it more difficult to obtain purchase points to insert tools to cut and spread materials.

“These danger areas must be exposed from inside the car to indicate the location of the charged cartridges before cutting tools can be used on the outside. Seats are electrically operated up and down often with no manual override which can mean having to cut the seats out, meaning tools are very close to a casualty as the electrics are out.



Laois Trauma Team members Bosco Lawlor and Paul Cody.



Wicklow crew members (l-r): Brian Murray, Noel Dowling, Colm Vickers (Incident Commander), Derek Kavanagh, Mark Redmond and Enda Bowes.



Carlow and Wicklow firefighters hold the Irish flag with pride: Back (l-r): Derek Kavanagh, Brian Murray, Mark Redmond, Andy Fisher, John Comerford, Dermot Scully & Paul Curran; Front: Alan Owens and Darren Somers.



Garda team members Gardaí Curran and Hudson from Waterford and Ronanstown Garda Stations pictured at the closing ceremony.

“As the years go by we are going to see more of these newer cars with all these safety features more often on the roads and obviously at incidents. This was the event to find out how best to deal with these issues rather than out on the scene for real.

“This is more reason than ever to continue competing, researching and trying out new ways of rescuing casualties from road traffic related incidents and other incidents where tactics, good techniques and quick thinking are imperative. This way we all win.”

SHOWCASING DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES

Describing the WRC as “a showcase for the different techniques, equipment and operational procedures in place around the world”, Declan Cassidy, WRO Treasurer, said it was “a road rescue pinnacle for learning on a global scale”.

As the World Rescue Organisation (WRO) is the governing body of the World Rescue Challenge and is made up of the 19 worldwide member country organisations, one of which is Rescue Organisation Ireland (ROI).

Two of ROI's executive members hold pivotal roles within the WRO – Mick Gahan (Wicklow County FRS) is the WRO Head Assessor while Declan Cassidy (Meath County FRS) is the WRO Treasurer.

Many ROI committee members are also involved in working groups within the WRO. The WRO plays an active role in developing post-crash response within the global stage, both as members of the

GRSP and the UNRSC.

Declan Cassidy noted in conclusion: “The ROI and the WRO are not exclusive organisations and welcome RTC and trauma response personnel to get involved....it's well worth it! The 2018 WRC is in Cape Town South Africa....maybe you can join us?”

For further information on Rescue Organisation Ireland (ROI) visit www.rescue-org-ireland.com and for the World Rescue Organisation (WRO) visit www.wrescue.org/

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