

TIPP FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE IN TOP SHAPE!

The recent Supreme Safety award win by Tipperary Fire and Rescue Service represents a first for any public service body in Ireland. Chief Fire Officer Dave Carroll tells Grace Heneghan it's mainly down to the strides made towards improving their occupational health and safety management systems and working on a new and innovative health and wellness programme.

Tipperary Fire & Rescue Service, one of the largest retained fire services in the country, is still basking in the glory of winning the Supreme Safety Award at the 55th National Irish Safety Organisation/Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISO/NISG) Annual Safety Awards in Killarney on 12 October. And Chief Fire Officer Dave Carroll attributes the award to both a huge effort and engagement in the safety management system by all fire service personnel across all 12 stations in the county.

The award serves to reinforce the status of Tipperary Fire & Rescue Service as safety leaders within the country; having won the President's Award for Best New Entrant in 2013 for the first time, followed by the Best Public Service Award for the last four consecutive years.

A joint statement released by NISO and NISG at the awards presentation read: "The Supreme Safety Award, sponsored by Irving Oil Whitegate Refinery, was presented for consistently showing good or continuously improving health and safety performance over a number of years and an outstanding contribution to occupational safety, health and welfare during the previous year".

"Achieving the Supreme Award this year represents a whole new level and has been achieved on the back of some very hard work by all involved," he tells 'Emergency Services Ireland'.



Pictured (l-r): Harry Galvin, NISO President; Paul Reihill, HSE Lead, Irving Oil Whitegate Refinery; Councillor Mattie Ryan, Cathaoirleach of Tipperary County Council; Pat Breen TD, Minister of State for Trade, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection; and John Thompson, NISG Chairperson

SUPREME HALL OF FAME

"This is the first time that any public service body in Ireland has won the Supreme Award. There's a 'Hall of Fame' of the Supreme Award Winners since 1992 and the award has been won mostly by the large pharmaceutical companies over the last number of years such as Janssen, Pfizer and Merck, Sharpe & Dohme (MSD) and Swords Laboratories."

Carroll attributes their supreme award win to a huge amount of both effort and engagement throughout all levels of the organisation, starting at the top with their chief executive Joe MacGrath in Tipperary County Council.

The occupational health and safety management system, he



At the official launch of Setanta College's Wellness Programme for Tipperary Fire & Rescue Service in July 2018 (back row l-r): Dan Kennedy, Thurles Fire Officer; Dave Carroll, Tipperary's Chief Fire Officer; Paul Gallagher, Assistant Chief Fire Officer in Tipperary; (front row l-r): Dr Liam Hennessy, Founder and Academic Director of Setanta College; Luke Jordan, Course Co-ordinator, and Marc Mulhaire, Thurles firefighter (Pic: Michael O'Sullivan/OSM PHOTO)

says, has paved the way for the best possible working conditions within the fire service. "Our commitment in this area has been recognised with this award and I'd like to congratulate our Health and Safety Committee and all the members of our service for making this possible.

"It is only by everybody engaging in the health and safety procedures and the culture that we set that we are able to achieve these awards. In winning this award we join an elite club of former winners which brings with it a challenge to not only retain but to further improve on our safety record."

HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAMME

Carroll says their active Health and Safety Committee is continually putting a lot of new initiatives in place. The committee comprises one representative from each of the 12 fire stations, and they do a lot of the groundwork for Tipperary Fire & Rescue Service. When they devise initiatives the fire chief says that they will also get as much support as possible.

"The Health and Wellness Project is a case in point. The idea was raised at one of our safety meetings back in 2015 by one of the fire crew members. It has really evolved and taken off since then. This wellness programme is the first of its kind to be rolled out for a fire service in this country, in association with Setanta College in Limerick, who have coined the phrase themselves 'Fighting Fire with Fitness', which is their tagline for the programme.

"We now focus on proactive health and not just reactive health issues and medical support in the event of injuries or illness in the workplace. So, it's really an injury-reduction programme as much as anything else. When we rolled out the programme two years ago we didn't know where it was going back then to be honest.

"We look after the stress and psychological aspects of the job through our critical incident stress management (CISM) programmes, which are both proactive and reactive. Incidents are dealt with as this arise and fire crews are debriefed and counselled accordingly."

FITNESS IN FOCUS

In terms of the health and fitness part of the job, it goes without saying that firefighters have to deal with a lot of physically challenging tasks. So, Tipperary Fire & Rescue Service is continually encouraging all of their fire crews to keep fit and healthy.

Carroll says: "There are 130 firefighters in 12 stations across the county who do a dangerous, physical, and stressful job. We're very much focused on health and safety, but, to be honest, it was all about the safety element, as opposed to the health. We realised we had to move towards the health element of health and safety.

"We have shopkeepers, electricians, people with day jobs and within five minutes of a call-out, they have to be in the station



Back Row (l-r): James Tarrant, Cashel Fire Brigade, Dave Carroll, Chief Fire Officer, John Shiners, Senior Asst. Chief Fire Officer, Liam Quinn, Health & Safety Advisor, John Hocht, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and Derek Deane, Cloughjordan Fire Brigade.
 Front Row (l-r): John Thompson, NISG Chairperson, Michael MacCarthy, Thurles Fire Brigade, Tipperary Cathaoirleach Cllr Mattie Ryan, Jim Halpin, Cahir Fire Brigade, Paul Gallagher, Asst. Chief Fire Officer, Paddy Pyke, Clonmel Fire Brigade, Gary Donnelly, Borrisokane Fire Brigade, and Harry Galvin, NISO President.

ready to go. We don't have them on a 9-5 basis where we can have tailored packages, so it was really to try and come up with something that would fit the retained fire service."

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Carroll approached Setanta College in Thurles to help devise a health and wellness plan and flexible enough to work within demands of the service. The college provides strength and conditioning and performance science education to students all around the world. Its collaboration with Tipperary Fire and Rescue Service is the first of its kind in the country.

The idea to investigate the possibility of a wellness programme came from the grassroots level, says Carroll: "It came from our health and safety committee, which is comprised of firefighters, to look at something like this. It has been supported right up to the chief executive of Tipperary County



John Shiners, Senior Asst. Chief Fire Officer, Liam Quinn, Health & Safety Advisor, Cathaoirleach Mattie Ryan, Joe MacGrath, Chief Executive, Dave Carroll, Chief Fire Officer, and Eddie Ryan, Senior Asst. Chief Fire Officer.



Chief Fire Officer Dave Carroll pictured with representatives from Tipperary Fire and Rescue Service and Setanta College.

Council, so it came from the ground and got support at the very highest level within the local authority."

Following that, one student from each fire station was signed up to a 10-week functional screening course at Setanta College. The focus of this course was to equip them with the skills to work with colleagues in identifying faulty movement patterns and assigning exercises to remedy them. Again, the thinking behind this focus was prevention of injuries and improved performance when on call-outs.

All students were then signed up to a 10-week resistance training course. Some fire stations have installed gyms to assist staff training on an ongoing basis. The plan is to have a gym fitted in every Tipperary fire station by the end of next year, according to the fire chief.

SETANTA SETS THE PACE

Dr Liam Hennessy, founder of Setanta College and academic director, is a former director of fitness with the IRFU and has worked with many sports stars. "The whole area of promoting health and wellness through physical activity is at the core of what we do. It's not just about performance and winning, it's about longevity and wellness and health.

"The programme devised for the firefighters was divided into four phases – screening, testing, and educating the participants. It began with a screening of 40 firefighters, across fitness, nutrition, and body mass index. It looked at their fundamental movement score –movement patterns of the body; how a person squats, steps, stands, or reaches for something.

"The idea is that if you improve fundamental movement patterns for a person, such as their posture in standing or reaching or how they squat, you can decrease their risk of injury in a manoeuvre associated with that key movement. Course coordinator Luke Jordan then devised individual six-week intensive training plans."

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Carroll says the feedback from participants has been very positive: "It's about a healthier workforce that makes for a happier workforce that makes for a safer workforce. The better condition they are in, the better they can do their job. If we're reducing injuries for firefighters, we've a better fire service for that."

He says the roll-out of wellness officers is a rewarding aspect

National Irish Safety Organisation
55th Annual Health and Safety Conference

NISO/NISG All Ireland Safety Awards
Supreme Award Winners Hall of Fame 1992 – 2017

| YEAR | SUPREME AWARD WINNER |
|------|--|
| 2017 | Jones Engineering Group |
| 2016 | John Paul Construction |
| 2015 | Sierra Support Services Group |
| 2014 | Cold Chon Galway Ltd. (Chemoran) |
| 2013 | GE Healthcare |
| 2012 | MSD, Brinny |
| 2011 | Diamond Innovations Irish Operations |
| 2010 | Masonite Ireland |
| 2009 | PSE Kinsale Energy Ltd |
| 2008 | Swords Laboratories |
| 2007 | Baxter Healthcare Irish Manufacturing Operations |
| 2006 | Hjilstrom Birex Pharmaceuticals Ltd. |
| 2005 | Roadbridge Ltd. |
| 2004 | Helsinn Chemicals Ireland Ltd. |
| 2003 | Bausch & Lomb Ireland |
| 2002 | 3E Superabrasives Ireland |
| 2001 | Merck Sharp & Dohme (Ireland) Ltd. |
| 2000 | Aughinish Alumina |
| 1999 | Janssen Pharmaceutical Ltd. |
| 1998 | Bausch & Lomb Ireland Sunglass Operation |
| 1997 | Olin Chemicals BV |
| 1996 | Intel Ireland Ltd. |
| 1995 | Janssen Pharmaceutical Limited |
| 1994 | Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland |
| 1993 | Insh Refining plc |
| 1992 | Arthur Guinness & Son (Dublin) Ltd |

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of this investment, with fire services in Cork, Waterford, and Clare expressing an interest in the initiative. "There's a trained person in every station to do assessments on both existing and new staff coming in, and can devise programmes for them.

"Now that we're at a stage where they can see that we're self-sufficient, that we have in-house expertise, I can see it rolling out to other services across the country down the line."

You can follow Tipperary Fire & Rescue Service on Facebook for more updates and information. Visit www.facebook.com/TipperaryFireandRescue/