

# Celebrating Ireland's Frontline Emergency Services

'National Services Day 2024' served once again to celebrate Ireland's statutory and voluntary emergency services, as over 1,000 personnel from the frontline services paraded along the streets of Dublin, Cork, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Drogheda and Wexford. Owen Medland, founding board member of National Services Day, reflects on the success of the event since it was first rolled out in 2013.

It was late 2012 when I received a phone call from a gentleman introducing himself as Seamus O'Neill. Since that call and over the next 12 years the concept of a day for the men and women of Ireland's frontline, emergency and security services was born.

Seamus O'Neill, a retired school principal never forgot the support local frontline service workers gave to his school. "We'd had no money in the school and the army, and the guards used to play football matches to fundraise for us. So, in 2013 I was looking around and there was nothing in the State that recognised the work that the emergency and security services were doing."

He decided to do something about it. He pulled together volunteers from all the frontline services to form a non-profit organisation: FESSEF (Frontline Emergency and Security Services Eire Forum). Their mission would be to create events for the public to show their appreciation, while fostering greater collaboration between their services. In 2021 FESSEF was restructured and rebranded as National Services Day and by taking that phonecall in 2012 I was committed to this vision as one of the "volunteers" from the services.

From the first year of the parade in 2013 it was evident to the small committee under Seamus's dogged determination that there was an appetite for Ireland's

statutory and voluntary services to celebrate their collective service, to commemorate those who have served and inspired the next generation to volunteer and work in the sector.

By 2018 with some 24 state and voluntary bodies now on board and the annual parade gaining attention on the streets of Dublin, the day was to become official when the then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar approved the granting of the first Saturday of September as National Services Day. "You are an integral part of the fabric of every community and the life blood of civic engagement when danger presents," he had noted at the time.

## 'NATIONAL SERVICES DAY' REBRANDED

Following the event in 2019, the consolidation of the work of the small committee saw the rebranding as National Services Day and the election of a voluntary board to build and drive Ireland's fledgling national day. Under the stewardship of the new Chairperson Aiden Hanna the small board set about bringing structure, professionalism and sustainability to a new brand of National Services Day.

The team moved through the Covid years and seized the public's appetite for recognition; the regional committees were formed, the NSD website was developed while branded materials were produced to



'National Services Day 2024' was officially launched in Dublin Castle by Minister for Public Expenditure Paschal Donohoe and Lord Mayor of Dublin James Geoghegan, pictured here with Aidan Hanna, Chair of the National Services Day (NSD) Board and with some members from the various emergency services who will participate in this year's parade.

promote National Services Day and its ethos.

Looking back on these times it is incredible what was achieved on top of the busy day jobs of the small board at the heart of National Services Day. For me personally I continue to challenge those in office to organise a National Services Day for their people as it is clearly apparent that the benefits far outweigh any challenge that participation may present. Ultimately the showcasing of what good citizenship looks like is a priceless societal bonus.

The big challenge for this year's National Services Day came when the Nations League football fixture between Ireland vs England, not to mention other major events, were scheduled for the first Saturday of September.

**CEREMONY REMEMBERS LIVES LOST IN NATIONAL SERVICE**

A wreath-laying ceremony at Dublin Castle marked the start of this year's National Services Day on 14 September, followed by a minute's silence to remember those who lost their lives in national service, while 'The Last Post' was played before Ireland's tricolour was raised to full mast and Amhrán na bhFiann played.

"The day reminds us that many public servants put themselves at risk, at a time in which citizens can be vulnerable, also at moments of danger. It allows us to recognise all of our different public servants across the different organisations, to thank them for their work and understand the variety of work that goes on in looking after our country," noted Minister for Public Expenditure Paschal Donohoe.

Lord Mayor of Dublin James Geoghegan said: "It is a hugely felt emotion amongst Irish people and amongst Dubliners as to how proud we are of our services. It is incumbent on every politician to support you in any way that we possibly can."



Owen Medland has held several RNLi operational roles during a career that spans 25 years in supporting the safe delivery of service for the 46 lifeboat stations in Ireland. A familiar face in the maritime and inland waters SAR circles in Ireland, the former naval officer now volunteers as a water safety officer with Clogherhead RNLi, and serves on the Board of National Services Day, since its inception in 2013.



Leading this year's parades, the RNLi was acknowledged for providing 200 years of service.

With state and voluntary emergency personnel assigned to look after the public's safety the difficult decision was made to reschedule the parade to Saturday 14 September. However, the regional event in Wexford was able to go ahead on 7 September, due the availability of the town's quayside location.

The weather certainly shone on both 7 and 14 September, with the levels of engagement and enjoyment at the events in Dublin, Wexford, Drogheda, Cork, Kildare, Limerick and Galway palpable for all those who attended and participated.

**CURRENT NSD BOARD ELECTED FOR 2025**

- Chairperson: Aiden Hanna – Civil Defence
- Vice Chairperson: Darryl Coen – National Ambulance Service
- Spokesperson: Owen Medland – RNLi Volunteer
- Treasurer: Turlough Dooley – Dublin Airport Fire and Rescue Service
- Secretary: Derek O'Connor – Retired Customs Officer
- Public Relations Officer: Barney Malone – Revenue and Customs
- Ceremonial Planning and Events Co-ordinator: Michael O'Mahoney
- Website Officer: Lorraine Galvin – RNLi Volunteer
- Social Media Officer: Wesley O'Sullivan – Order of Malta Ambulance Corps
- Education Officer: Fergus Murray – National Ambulance Service



Chairperson Aiden Hanna, Civil Defence officer, addresses attendees at the wreath-laying ceremony in Dublin Castle.



For further information email [info@nationalservicesday.ie](mailto:info@nationalservicesday.ie) or visit [www.nationalservicesday.ie](http://www.nationalservicesday.ie)

**COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE**

In Dublin a commemorative wreath-laying service was held in Dublin Castle in advance of the parade through the nation’s capital. The regional and Dublin displays were thronged with youngsters exploring the stands, equipment and talking with the personnel who participated in the National Services Day, delivering on its mission to inspire future service personnel.

During the parades the sound of bands and music resonated throughout their communities with a special mention to Ireland’s Cancer Choir ‘Sea of Change’ – this incredibly strong group of ladies turns out, year on year, to support National Services Day.

Importantly, I witnessed both full-time staff members and volunteers from various organisations renewing their friendships, having met during events from previous years, bringing to life the vision of camaraderie between the unseen and unsung staff and volunteers from across Ireland’s services.

It was very rewarding to witness the impressive turnout of Defence Forces personnel alongside voluntary services such as the Order of Malta, Blood Bikes to the ever-present members of An Garda Síochána, the HSE National Ambulance Service and the fire services.

This annual event is about the public celebrating and commemorating the work of Ireland’s emergency services, and likewise for these

services to inspire the next generation. Ranging from our Gardaí, Defence Forces, National Ambulance Service, Dublin Fire Brigade through to the Irish Coast Guard, RNLI, Order of Malta, St John’s Ambulance, the list is endless. They are all part of a network that keeps us safe every day.

It would not be possible to name or thank everyone involved in supporting the day. My fellow Bboard members and I hope that these reflections inspire those in office and positions of influence to support next year’s National Services Day on 6 September 2025.




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**What are the types of Fire Doors?**

There are many different types of fire doors available - from different materials to varying fire ratings and protection levels. The effectiveness of a fire door and type required depends on its location in the building, and the type of fire hazards surrounding it.

A door fire performance is tested in accordance with either BS 476-22 or BS EN 1634-1 and marked accordingly. When tested to the BS 476-22 standard such doors are marked by the prefix FD, followed by its minutes-based resistance rating. Therefore, a door marked FD 30 can resist integrity failure for 30 minutes, FD 60 can resist for 60 minutes. When tested to BS EN 1634-1 standard and classified in accordance with BS EN 13501-2, doors are identified by the prefix E followed by the integrity rating expressed in minutes e.g. E 30, E60.

Integrity failure happens when cracks/openings develop on the door due to the pressure of the fire, which then starts to allow hot gases and smoke to pass through. Stability failure occurs when the door starts to collapse due to the conditions. There are glazing options with toughened fire glass that can withstand temperatures in excess of 1600°F, compared to just 250°F of standard glazing. Glass fire screens and doors can also provide performance up to 120 minutes integrity.

**Restriction of ‘Cold’ Smoke Spread**

As well as providing fire resistance, legislation requires certain doors to limit the spread of ambient temperature ‘cold’ smoke. These doors are fitted with a smoke seal and are identified by the suffix ‘S’ when tested in accordance with BS 476-31.1, e.g. FD 30S, and suffix ‘Sa’ when tested in accordance with BS EN 1634-3 and classified under BS EN 13501-2, e.g. FD 30Sa.

