



# MOUNTAIN RESCUE IRELAND

## Annual Report 2020

Saving Lives  
in the  
Mountains

24 / 7 / 365

[mountainrescue.ie](http://mountainrescue.ie)





Any individual or group requiring assistance in the upland and mountainous environs on the island of Ireland will be responded to by volunteers embedded in the local community.

These volunteers are organised into mountain rescue teams and tasked by the police force, A.G.S. within Ireland and the P.S.N.I. in Northern Ireland.

This tasking leads to an emergency response which will search, locate and rescue those seeking assistance and escort them to safety or deliver them to more definitive medical care.

Collectively these teams come together as Mountain Rescue Ireland (M.R.I.) to represent the views of its members on mountain rescue and safety, to represent and liaise on general matters with government, to propagate information on mountain rescue and safety

and take such action as may be necessary to promote a wider appreciation of the need for mountain safety.

M.R.I. is a member of the International Commission of Alpine Rescue (I.C.A.R.) the international body for mountain rescue organisations dedicated to the advancement of best practice in mountain rescue worldwide.



This report reflects back on 2020 and presents the commitment and work of the teams dedicated to responding to those in need.

2

M.R.I. consists of the following teams:

Donegal MRT

North West MRT

Sligo/Leitrim MRT

Mourne MRT

Mayo MRT

Galway MRT

Dublin/Wicklow MRT

SARDA (Ireland)

Glen of Imaal MRT

South Eastern MRA

Kerry MRT

# M.R.I. Chairman's Report



This last year will be described by many words, most of which unable to fully describe the range of emotions endured. I however have been inspired and humbled by the exceptional dedication shown by the volunteers across this island willing, as always, to risk their own safety to help those in distress and danger.

This commitment to attend has always been at a cost to family and friends in lost time, but our loved ones worry even more than ever in this pandemic.

There has been an encouraging increase in the number of people taking to the Irish uplands for exercise, escapism and enjoyment. This increase in foot-fall also sees an increase in emergency call-outs. The mountain rescue teams are always ready, 24/7/365 to respond at the request of our calling authorities. Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) continues to support its member teams to operate, whether that be through continued insurance cover, provision of TETRA and SARCALL or a range of centralised training courses.

As the National SAR Plan continues to develop, MRI represents its member teams at both the Consultative

Committee and the Health and Safety Forum, with many more groups being launched. Representation continues at the NISAR Policy Group and we continue our relationships with our peers in Scottish Mountain Rescue and Mountain Rescue England and Wales.

Undoubtedly the next months and years ahead will be difficult, but together we will be able to weather any storm.

On behalf of the Board of Mountain Rescue Ireland, I wish to thank you all for the sacrifice you and your fellow volunteers make on a daily basis.

**Jonathan Shields**  
[chair@mountainrescue.ie](mailto:chair@mountainrescue.ie)

3





# M.R.I. Secretaries Report

In 2020 I took over the role of National Secretary and Board member from Ray Bradfield (SEMRA), and I wish to acknowledge the work and contribution of Ray over the last number of years and to thank Ray for his guidance, stewardship and never ending patience as I settle into the role.

2020 was a year like no other. The emergence of COVID and the knock-on effect on our daily lives has been profound. We all have had to do a full rethink on how we conduct our business.

One of the biggest challenges for mountain rescue teams (MRT'S) is fundraising. Teams normally carryout a number of fundraising activities to supplement the yearly grant funding from the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport. These activities include, street collections, mountain walk challenges, mountain runs to coffee mornings organised by supporter groups. COVID has devastated this source of income for MRT's. The normal yearly running cost for teams is approx. €65K although the yearly grant covers some, the remainder of the cost is funded through the teams own fundraising events. It is estimated that the lost fundraising revenue for 2020 is €500k.

Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) does welcome government grant schemes that are open to teams to apply, but like all in the voluntary sector, government must liaise with the representative organisation to bring the additional much needed funding.

MRI continues to seek additional funding for its teams on the island of Ireland to counter balance the losses in fundraising revenue. Without this revenue, teams may not be able to function.

With the growth of people wanting to enjoy the outdoors more in keeping to open spaces, mountain rescue has continued to see a yearly increase in callouts, even during the pandemic.

Teams have been busy developing COVID protocols for both live operations and training. Team training is vital to ensure that there is no skills decay.

For MRI we have moved to virtual meetings with the most frequent saying "you're on mute". We have held our National Executive meetings, board meetings and AGM through the virtual platform. This has worked well but we do miss the chance to network with our colleagues from different teams on our AGM / Workshop weekend.

National training has also suffered due to the ongoing pandemic and the different levels of lockdowns, but I am optimistic of the level of work ongoing in the background to bring national training back to the fore.



Training and development discussions are ongoing across multiple aspects of mountain rescue training, search management, search skills, operations management, rope rescue, technical rescue, induction training and hill party leader skill.

MRI provides insurance through grant funding from central government and we have worked with our broker to continue to deliver best in class cover for our membership, which now needs to take into consideration the arrival of COVID.

Continuous engagement with our peers both nationally and locally enables us to better dovetail to the requirements with the state agencies in order to deliver for those who find themselves in difficulty in Irelands wild and remote mountain environments.

With the successful rollout of the SARCALL CAD platform (SARCALL Introduction Page) for both An Garda Síochána and National Ambulance Service in relation to the tasking of Mountain Rescue Teams, this has delivered an efficient tasking tool between the Principle Response Agencies (PRA) and mountain rescue teams.

2021 will also be a challenge for many, with the delivery of vaccination programmes, hopefully this will bring us closer together to enjoy the beautiful wild and remote places on our island..... as we get used to the new normal.

**Kenny Roberts**  
secretary@mountainrescue.ie





## Police Service of Northern Ireland

I wish on behalf of the PSNI to recognise the commitment of those in our local community who volunteer with the mountain rescue teams and Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) as a whole, not forgetting the support provided by their families and those who work behind the scenes to keep the services running.

Throughout 2020 the teams have continued to provide a professional standard of assistance to the PSNI and the community as a whole. The circumstances of COVID19 through the majority of 2020 has provided substantial challenge to all those who serve the public. It is evident that this has resulted in more members of the community venturing into the hills for the multiple benefits that exercise brings. This has increased the demand on teams and deployments and as with any outdoor activity, whilst most go without incident; there is always the chance that

circumstances can change in a moment. It is reassuring to know that we continue to rely on the expertise of the teams to attend and resolve these incidents at any time of the day or night. Whilst the teams focus is primarily on the outdoor activities enjoyed in our mountains, the ever increasing numbers of missing persons, as well as the more extreme weather events that are becoming more common continue to provide new challenges to both statutory and voluntary partners.

I look forward to seeing closer working relationships between the PSNI Search & Rescue team and MRI in the upcoming year. Finally I would like to thank the teams associated to MRI and those in SARDA for their continued assistance and commitment throughout 2020 and wish them all the best for 2021.

**Chris Hamill**  
T/Chief Inspector



## An Garda Síochána

The Mountain Rescue Teams across the island of Ireland, under the governance of Mountain Rescue Ireland, provide an invaluable resource to the response agencies and the general public.

We are very fortunate to have such wonderful and beautiful locations throughout Ireland where people can enjoy our stunning natural amenities. However, experience has shown us that those same vistas can also become hazardous and dangerous, and with more and more people taking to the outdoors for recreation, it is inevitable that accidents and medical emergencies will happen. The challenging terrain and changeable weather conditions often result in these incidents

requiring the efficient response of a specialist skillset. It is a source of comfort and reassurance to the statutory emergency services and the public, that mountain rescue teams have the skill, commitment and expertise to assist in these challenging situations and have again, in 2020, demonstrated same.

The commitment of Mountain Rescue volunteers, and their families, cannot be overstated. I would like to thank Mountain Rescue Ireland and associated Search and Rescue Dog Teams for your commitment and dedication in 2020 and wish you all a safe and successful 2021.

**Orla McPartlin**  
Assistant Commissioner

[mountainrescue.ie](http://mountainrescue.ie)

## Mountain Rescue Ireland. A huge Thank You

### Mountaineering Ireland's Perspective

Enjoying the adventure, thrill and responsibility of being in the mountains is the core ethos of mountaineers. Skills training, self-reliance and environmental respect are key aspects of responsible behaviour and safe practice in the mountains. The benefits to our health & wellbeing, through physical & mental challenge and interaction & connection with nature, are well evidenced, as are the inherent risks and responsibilities associated with journeying into remote and wild areas.

The Mountain Rescue Teams continue to provide an essential yet voluntary service to many, including those who encounter difficulties whilst in the pursuit of adventure. 2020 has been an exceptional year and a busy year for the rescue teams, where their services have been extended to assist the increasing participant numbers and associated incidents, in addition to responding to extreme weather events and a pandemic. Alongside attending rescues, team members engage in skills training and rescue practice, to enable them to operate efficiently and safely as a team during call outs, which are typically in the worst of conditions and at night time. As teams benefit from improved technical equipment and the introduction of location aps, team effectiveness increases, but Team members continue to volunteer more of their time to fundraise for provision of this essential service. Mountaineering Ireland would like to ask that all participants join them in donating to this essential service and support them by asking the three simple questions developed by AdventureSmart and endorsed by Mountaineering Ireland.

Q1 Do I have the right gear?  
Q2 Do I know what the weather will be like?  
Q3. Am I confident I have the Skills & Knowledge for the day?

To become responsible participants, we must make ourselves aware of the inherent risk in all things we choose to do. By preparing and educating ourselves, we increase our enjoyment of the activity and are in a position to make better decisions to help manage, minimise or avoid hazards and thus keep ourselves safer whilst we have fun in the mountains. By taking on this personal responsibility, we reduce the likelihood of needing to be rescued.

Jane Carney  
Training Officer  
[Jane@mountaineering.ie](mailto:Jane@mountaineering.ie)  
[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)



# Strategic Plan 2018-2021



MRI developed its 3 year strategic plan during 2018 and declared the priority was to deliver to mountain rescue teams the means required for them to continue their mountain rescue mission of saving lives 24/7/365 in Irelands upland and mountainous regions, and to protect and support its members and their teams and volunteers as they save lives in mountainous areas.

M.R.I. will seek to secure funding towards the delivery of this strategic plan. M.R.I. will monitor the delivery of this plan at Board and Committee meetings and present progress to the membership annually at general meetings.

MRI Stakeholders have been critical in allowing MRI volunteers to deliver search and rescue services

throughout 2020 and your support will be required in 2021 more than ever on the back of the critical year 2020 has been with the COVID pandemic. However, none of this would be possible without the volunteers who dedicate themselves to be on call 24/7/365, along with their families and employers who form the foundation upon which this rescue service is built on.

To deliver on this, M.R.I. has identified the following strategic goals:	
1.	Insurance coverage to protect the team operations
2.	Capital funding for teams to develop or maintain rescue bases
3.	Capital funding for to replace team emergency response vehicles when needed
4.	Current funding to maintain and replace rescue equipment
5.	Current funding for training to maintain the mountain rescue skillset



- **Training and equipment** costs continue to be a challenge especially in a context of increased rescue activity. MRI is engaged currently with the DTTAS in relation to a review of the grant support systems.
- **Emergency response vehicles**, critical to reaching casualties, can now be funded through grants sourced through the CLAR scheme operated by the DRCD.
- **Rescue bases** are a need for all mountain rescue teams and MRI is assisting teams with sourcing the required support.
- **Insurance** is foundational support for all volunteers and MRI would like to acknowledge the support of Minister Ring and the DRCD.

To deliver on this strategic plan MRI will seek to ensure that all mountain rescue teams are housed in appropriate bases. MRI will work with teams, local authorities, agencies and State funders to deliver on this strategic need.



# MRI Company Limited by Guarantee (C.L.G.)

From a humble beginning in 1965, with 6 attendants at the first Irish Mountain Rescue Association meeting in Bryansford Co Down, we have sought to facilitate interaction development, and representation collectively. This effort grew in the subsequent years to the current stage of development where every mountainous location on the island of Ireland has a mountain rescue team ready to volunteer 24/7/365 to any request for emergency assistance.

As the organisation developed and times changed it became appropriate to change the organisational character and incorporate as a charity company limited by guarantee (C.L.G.) in order to give certainty to both internal and external stakeholders in M.R.I. This process was completed during 2018.

## MRI Board of Directors

<b>External</b> Mountaineering Community	<b>Internal</b> Company Secretary	<b>Internal</b> Chair of the Board	<b>Internal</b> Treasurer	<b>External</b> Charity Sector
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## MRI Executive Committee

### Elected Officers

Secretary	Chair	Treasurer	
Public Relations	Medical	Statistics	Peer Review

### Project Officers

Aeronautical	Tetra	SARCALL
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## Executive Committee Members

Representatives from each of the member mountain rescue teams



## Members of MRI (CLG)

Members of the Company



## MRI Board of Directors

External: Jane Carney  
Internal: Kenny Roberts, Secretary  
Internal: Jonathan Shields, Chair  
Internal: Eva-Marie O'Brien, Treasurer  
External: Niall Greene

## MRI Executive Committee

Secretary - Kenny Roberts  
Chair - Jonathan Shields  
Treasurer - Eva-Marie O'Brien  
Public Relations - Ruth Cunniffe  
Medical - Paul Butcher  
Statistics - Lorcan O'Neill  
Peer Review - Alan Carr  
Aeronautical - Diarmaid Scully  
Training Development - Brendan Beirne  
SARCALL - Donal McNamara

MRI now serves the community through the following company objects:

- to benefit the community by assessing and keeping under review the need for, and the requirements of, mountain rescue services in Ireland;
- to encourage and assist in the formation, training, and development of mountain rescue teams;
- to represent and liaise with community and state services with regard to the achievement of its objectives;
- to propagate information on mountain rescue and safety and take such action as is necessary to promote a wider appreciation of the need for mountain safety;

MRI has adapted the governance standards for a Type C organisation under the Governance Code and is recognised by them as such. As we go forward MRI will demonstrate compliance with charity best practice by incorporating best practice in at the design stage.

MRI enters 2021 with the former association dissolved and the new formation dedicated to serving the mountain rescue volunteers throughout the island. We would like to thank Niall Greene and Jane Carney who have volunteered to serve on the board as external directors.

# 2020 STATISTICS REPORT

In keeping with the rest of the world 2020 was a strange year for Mountain Rescue with large variations geographically and over the span of the year. The last quarter of 2019 was relatively quiet and this continued in the first quarter of 2020.

The most noticeable divisions were between the areas adjacent to big populations and the more remote areas. 2 teams nearest our biggest city broke their records for callouts both in a year and in a month, while some of the teams in more remote areas sometimes went over 3 months without a single callout. The pandemic was undoubtedly the reason for this with people not venturing far from home for their ration of fresh air and exercise. Chaos ensued in some popular scenic spots near cities and Gardai had their hands full a number of times trying to control the situation. Inconsiderate parking can cause problems for Mountain Rescue and this was the case in a number of cases where there were delays in accessing casualties because entrances were blocked.

Rescue Dogs Association (also an MRI team) who are often tasked to work in the lowlands to find missing persons.

The number of foreign tourists assisted was down significantly to 15 in 2020. In the second half of 2019 alone almost double that number of foreign tourists were assisted.

The pandemic had a significant affect on the numbers for 2020 and it looks like the same will apply to the 2021 numbers.



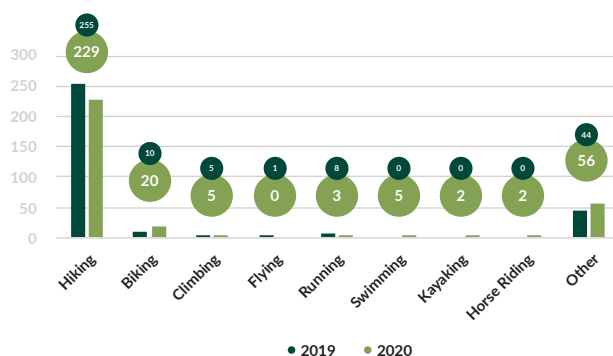
8

## Annual Report 2020

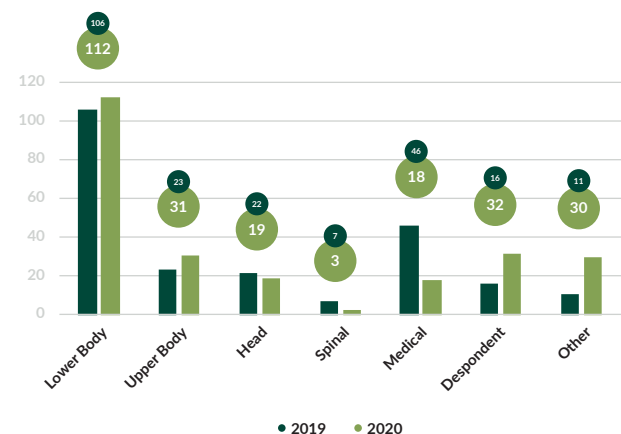
Though the total number of incidents at 330 was roughly the same as 2019 (345), the number of person-hours spent at callouts was down significantly from 14,444 to 9,695. This was due to the fact that the number of personnel attending a callout is kept to a minimum to mitigate against team members acquiring or spreading a Covid19 infection. Infection control procedures though meant that more time was spent after callouts disinfecting equipment and personal clothes and gear. The most common injury types dealt with were lower body, most of which were lower leg or ankle injuries. After that came medical problems and then upper body injuries.

Sadly the number of despondent individuals dealt with doubled from 16 in 2019 to 32 in 2020, though many of these were encountered by SARDA, the Search And

## Activities of Casualties 2020



## Nature of Injuries 2020





## 2020 ANNUAL STATISTICS

250  
DAY TIME

345

95  
NIGHT TIME

### TOTAL INCIDENTS

84  
HELICOPTER TASKINGS

9695  
PERSON HOURS

999

GARDA / PSNI

Callout Officer

Callout SMS

MOBILE BASE

HELP!

MOUNTAIN RESCUE BASE

Mountain rescue teams are only possible due to the commitment of the volunteers who dedicate to being on call 24/7/365 to assist those in need

65  
LOST

59  
MISSING

132  
MINOR INJURIES

50  
SERIOUS INJURIES

25  
TOTAL NO. FATALITIES

127  
SEARCHES

15  
FOREIGN TOURISTS

8  
OTHER\*



\*Mountain rescue teams are tasked to a variety of incidents arising from their wilderness & mountainous capabilities.

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Registered Charity Number: 20026370. CHY (Revenue) Number: 10412

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# Maud Cunningham - In Loving Memory

Service is a word often used when describing Maud Cunningham's life. Growing up on a farm Maud developed a passion for the outdoors but also a great sense of community as demonstrated in her professional and many voluntary roles.

Maud spent most of her career as a full-time lecturer in Portadown Technical College educating young adults, and later part time in the South West College as a business administrator and training tutor for community education and personal development where she worked with a wide range of students of varying learning abilities.

Maud served 42 years with the Girl Guides movement and described herself as an Assistant Guide Leader however, she held various posts including County Commissioner from 1987-1993 and Ulster Activity Adviser. She was awarded the Anderson Plate in 1986 for outstanding service to the county and a Laurel award in 1993 for outstanding services to Girlguiding UK-wide. In a tribute by her long-term friend and Girlguiding Ulster Chief Commissioner, Sue Hogg said, "Maud was a legend in her own time for her work with children and girls whom she loved and is probably one of the most unselfish people I have ever met. She set standards, she had great integrity and the guide promise and laws stood at the heart of everything she did."

Living in the parish of St John's Florencecourt all her life, Maud was interested in all aspects of church life. She was

the Honorary Secretary of her parish and filled several important rolls within the diocese including secretary and lay reader, positions that took her throughout the cross-border region as well as regular meetings in Dublin. She served as a Sunday school superintendent for many years and accompanied parish children to Los Angeles and Ohio over the years.

Maud volunteered for 27 years with the North West Mountain Rescue Team serving in several roles including President and received her long service award from Mountain Rescue Ireland. Maud spent many hours on both call outs and training with the team and, throughout that time, always gave freely of her time and experience as well as her wit and good humour. She also helped establish a community mother and toddler group and delivered first aid training to business and voluntary groups. In recognition of Maud's dedication to her community she was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's New Year Honours List in 2016. Not only will Maud be dearly missed by her mountain rescue colleagues but her passing has been felt both throughout Fermanagh and the wider mountain rescue community.







Facing into 2021, recognition is needed that saving a life in an upland or mountainous environment requires commitment to the mission at many levels.

For the mountain rescue volunteer to assist the casualty they must be supported by the mountain rescue team in the provision of the following:



The casualty requiring assistance is dependant on all these levels for support, regardless of the casualty being a visitor to or a resident of the island. It is vital that all stakeholders: local councils, government departments and agencies, and other interested parties recognise their place in the mountain rescue mission.

**Saving Lives  
in the  
Mountains**

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[www.mountainrescue.ie](http://www.mountainrescue.ie)



# North West Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Graeme Stanbridge  
Team Leader: Keith Thompson  
Website: [www.nwmrt.org](http://www.nwmrt.org)



31  
CALLOUTS

## Annual Report 2020

In 2020 the team was called out on 31 occasions, an increase of three from the previous year, and again 50% were in County Antrim. A notable call out was in August when we were alerted to a family lost on Slemish Mountain. Four ambulances were dispatched as the party contained two adults, and four children under the age of eight years. It was a simple rescue, leading the family from the mountain with no injuries, but it demonstrated two points. Firstly, the number of resources sent to rescues when children are involved, and secondly, how easily you can get into difficulties even in Summer. Some would not class Slemish a mountain as it is a volcanic plug with a height of 437 metres (1,433 feet), but its circular route of 1.2 miles is a grade five walk and being isolate is often covered in low cloud.

We live on an island that does not have the biggest mountains, but our weather can make them very hostile and therefore our extended charitable purpose of educating the public on hazards in mountains becomes ever more important. Increased tourism adds to the number of people venturing into the mountains and we are keen to educate those who are visiting from warmer and more settled climes. Our education visits to community groups were greatly curtailed by Covid 19 with only three completed at the start of the year.

Covid 19 dominated everything and we quickly adapted by writing and implementing new risk assessments and operating procedures. We ran a large public campaign to negate an increase of accidents from large crowds taking to the hills and urged them to keep to known routes and stay within their limits. Call outs increased slightly, and we hope the campaign went some way to restricting the number of casualties needing assistance. Another casualty of Covid 19 was recruitment and we are focused on a large recruitment programme next year. Five of our six established street collections were cancelled which had a big impact on income however costs also reduced with fewer courses and a greatly reduced fuel bill for six vehicles.

As we entered our fortieth year, a five-year strategy was launched with the aim of propelling the team to more and higher skills as well as greater professionalism. Key is to recruit support group members which will help run the charity, releasing operational members to focus on training and increase their availability for call outs. Our aim to purchase new communication equipment was achieved with a grant greatly received from the Department of Justice.

Finally, it was with great sadness that we lost our President Maud Cunningham in November. Maud was devoted to community life, involved in many groups and her services were recognised with a British Empire Medal in the 2016 Queen's New Year Honours List. Maud is sorely missed but will not be forgotten.







Team Chair: Currently Vacant  
Team Coordinators: Neville Watson, Ian McCracken,  
Andrew McKee, Martin McMullan, John Keating,  
Alwynne Shannon  
Website: [www.mournemrt.org](http://www.mournemrt.org)

# Mourne Mountain Rescue Team

66  
CALLOUTS



13

As with all teams, the Mourne Mountain Rescue Team has experienced a very different and exceptionally challenging year in 2020. Normal activities such as training, fundraising etc and even our typical emergency response became severely disrupted due to the onset of the COVID pandemic and the resulting restrictions. Early March saw the team develop and implement exceptional pandemic procedures to ensure the continuity of our response capability, key to which was the protection of our members and wider community.

After an initial reduction in callouts, primarily due to lockdown measures, the team experienced a dramatic increase in callouts with the annual total reaching 66 rescues – an increase of circa. 54% on 2019 and the highest number ever for the Mourne Team. The number of persons requiring assistance also increased to a total of 130 – also a new high and an increase of 132% on 2019. Total members hours committed primarily to rescues due to the considerable reduction in all other activities totalled 2628 hours – an increase of 44% from 2019. Apart from the challenges posed by our additional pandemic procedures, other notable challenges came with callouts running on both consecutive days and simultaneously – the maximum simultaneous calls recorded was 5 involving 12 persons requiring assistance.

The range of incidents and injuries the team dealt with remained reasonably similar to previous years to include medical incidents and trauma injuries which unfortunately included 2 fatalities. Searches for those missing or lost also featured, with a notable increase in calls triggered and/or exacerbated by 'Winter' conditions/participation. As always, our rescues involved collaborative working with a variety of other services including PSNI, both local Policing, their Air Support Unit and their SAR Team; UK and Irish Coastguard, both their Co-ordination Centres (including ARCC), their SAR Aircraft & Crews and local Rescue Teams; NIAS, both local Crews, their HART Team and their HEMS Service; And our partners in MRI specifically SARDA and the North West MRT.

As the year progressed, development, training and fundraising activities started to increase within reason and using the advances of technology to provide remote opportunities as per our continuing pandemic procedures. The only notable decrease in team statistics for 2020 was unfortunately in relation to fundraising with a decrease of circa. £50,000 in comparison and coupled with the loss of a grant of circa. £450,000 towards our new base leaves a considerable challenge going forward. As we continue to adjust, we're restructuring our support activities to address the new challenges faced including increasing our fundraising capacity in conjunction with that required to move ahead with our much needed Rescue Base.

On a final note, sustaining and building capacity through training has, as ever, been a central feature of the team's activities and hence why the team started the year with a seminar on Volunteer Wellbeing – quite possibly a timely intervention given what we now know regarding the preceding months. As well as traditional training and development, there remains a critical need to consider all aspects of volunteer needs, particularly in light of the unique situation in which we place ourselves. We were delighted to welcome Jill Moreton, Steve Penny & Andy Elwood, all champions of Volunteer Wellbeing within Scottish MR to help bring the message to the Department of Justice and the NI Search and Rescue Forum. We were also delighted to be joined by members of the PSNI SAR, North West MRT, Dublin Wicklow MRT, NI Fire & Rescue, UK Coastguard, Lagan Search & Rescue and others in what is only a start in addressing Volunteer Wellbeing.

All in all, 2020 was both exceptionally challenging and rewarding for the Mourne Mountain Rescue Team. Reflecting on the solid performance of the team in meeting those challenges provides confidence and encouragement and the team look forward to continuing to serve the community who live, work and play in the Mourne area and beyond.

Annual Report 2020



# Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue

Team Chair: Terry Byrne  
Team Leader: Maurice Brady  
Website: [www.dwmrt.ie](http://www.dwmrt.ie)



117  
CALLOUTS

## Annual Report 2020

The team started off 2020 with our first fundraiser, the Art O' Neill challenge race, and it was a huge success again this year.

In February we started the selection process for new member intake and hence the training of 19 probationary members.

Unfortunately the spread of the Corona virus pandemic became wide spread across the island of Ireland, it became clear that unprecedented times lay ahead. The team had to postpone all training until correct health and safety protocols were put in place to ensure team members, their families and the public were safe. Fortunately we have a membership that consists of a lot of frontline medical personnel who were vital in the delivery of "donning on" and "doffing off" training which is now necessary on all callouts and patient contacts for the foreseeable future.

The impact this has had with the team has led to the cancelation of our other fundraising, event "Walk the Line", we did however manage a virtual "Run the line" which was successful.

In light of the first lock down it became clear that even though 2km and 5km restrictions were put in place, the callouts increased as the public flocked to the hills for exercise. This resulted in the team putting in place a pre-plan to address this situation. We also saw a need to have scaled down training sessions which adhered to social distancing at all times.

By the second quarter of 2020 the team had responded to almost 50 callouts and by the third quarter it was up at almost 100, even with restrictions in place. The team has many specialist areas one of our newest additions is the Dublin/Wicklow search dog team, which at the moment has a complement of 6 dogs. Two qualified dogs and four trainee dogs. The latest to qualify is Grace, a scent

specific man trailing dog. This now gives the team two disciplines of search dog, Rowan who is air scenting and Grace who is scent specific. The four dogs in training will eventually mean having two trained in each discipline. In October, 6 Team members were put through their paces on a Swift water rescue technician's course and resulted in 6 additional certified Swift water Rescue Technicians on the team.

In October and into November, re-training was also introduced in the form of on-line sessions. An EFR recertification course was run over several on-line sessions and a social distanced practical exam at the end with 23 re-certified EFR's.

Other on-line sessions also included weekly Sartopo and Caltopo "Search Management" demonstrations and training, which involved interactions with team members on various actions and tools that can be used remotely for search management planning.

As 2020 came to an end we had a total of 117 callouts, a new annual record with a total of 2,516 operational hours.

Thank you to all team members and their families for the support during a difficult year that will most definitely stay with everyone for a long time. Be safe.



14





Team Chair: Brendan Beirne  
Team Leader: Christiaan Clotworthy  
Website: [www.wmr.ie](http://www.wmr.ie)

# Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue

111  
CALLOUTS



2020 is known as the Covid 19 year and every fibre of society has been affected, including MR.

Covid readiness response had to be appropriate and fast. Specialist PPE training, unique to MR was carried out in early March, and the first few call-outs were handled with extra vigilance, gaining experience all the while, including PPE and stringent cleaning of kit and vehicles.

In line with Government restrictions hill walkers, climbers and bikers stayed away from the mountains for the most part however once restrictions were lifted the anticipated surge occurred. August saw a record month for call-outs ranging across the board. We pride ourselves in our ability to operate a voluntary service in a professional manner and our responses to the surge in August and after confirmed this.

Our principle source of income stems from our annual Moonlight Challenge MLC in November. While restrictions jumped from one level to another with no certainty for November, we took the responsible decision early on and postponed our MLC until 2021. This of course meant committing to a 50% reduction in our operational budget for the year. As with our response to Covid, early and swift action here allowed us to be response ready. Prudent spending over the good years allowed us to be prepared for this eventuality with a modern fleet of Rescue vehicles and a comprehensive range of essential gear from Medical to Crag to Swift water.

As a member of the Irish Red Cross we feel part of a bigger picture and they have regularly offered guidelines and advice regarding infection, prevention and control. The team felt it important to remain positive throughout the year and continue as 'normal' as much as possible.

- We continued our monthly Team meetings, albeit via Zoom.
- Training in general continued, following all the required guidelines at any particular time.
- Our recruitment program continued with 5 new members entering their probationary year in November.
- Our base in Trooperstown had some essential re-development and upgrade works carried out, including M&E, concrete hardstanding and internal mesh storage units along with other works. Many thanks to our colleagues in County Wicklow LEADER Partnership for their continued support.
- Last year we secured a parcel of land adjacent to us to allow for further development as our needs increase. Plans for MR specific training stations for this area have been suspended this year but it will serve as an overflow carpark for the time being.
- Our friends, the Froud family, whose young son Charlie died in a small plane crash in 2008 in the Wicklow mountains, have through their Foundation raised monies for us over the years. From their wonderful support we committed to purchasing a Team summer jacket with the Froud Sunflower emblem proudly alongside our Glen Team crest.
- Our summer BBQ and Christmas party were all cancelled but the Team focused on remaining buoyant. We are a family Team and we focused on looking out for, and after each other with appropriate contact throughout the year.

The country has weathered the storm and can see light at the end of the tunnel.

Through prudent timely planning, a strong steady leadership, our nurtured family ethos and a pure love of the mountains the Glen Team will remain on 'standby' and ready to react !

# South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association

Team Chair: Michael Power  
Team Leader: Liam McCabe  
Website: [www.semra.ie](http://www.semra.ie)



South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA) is a team of 58 people including 11 new trainee members. The team responded to 43 callouts in 2020, a significant increase on previous years. On the 19th January 2020, SEMRA received its 500th call out since its foundation in 1977. It took 40 years to get to our 400th call out, only 3 more years to get to our 500th and by the end of 2020 we are well on the way to 600.

## Call Outs

Both during Covid restrictions and as restrictions lifted, call outs increased, access to car parks and forest tracks became extremely difficult with the volume of cars parked in every available space on weekends. During the summer Coumshingaun became a call out hot spot for the team. Our call outs this year have tended to be for less experienced and less well-equipped walkers who suffer an injury, get caught out by the changing weather or by early darkness. The most recent call outs have been for lost walkers who have been found extremely cold. Blizzard packs have been purchased and spare clothing packs have been added to all the team first response packs.

## Training

We managed just two training days before the first lockdown in March. A media team for Land Rover UK joined us for the February training session in Mahon Falls to film a promotional video for social media release. When lock down came all training was put on hold. We became experts in Zoom but there is only so much you can do online. Our team leader took on the task of getting the team Covid rescue ready. Guidelines were drawn up, PPE sourced, call out procedures were amended and everything possible was done to protect the team members so that we could continue to respond to calls. During the Summer we managed to squeeze in two more training sessions on the hill before restrictions were increased again. It is no surprise that post call out

debriefs now take a bit longer, no one is in a rush to get away as we miss the contact of training sessions on the hill. It is only now we realise how important they are for keeping in touch and team morale as well as the skills we are learning or refreshing. Our 11 new trainee members have been hit the hardest by restrictions. They have had very little opportunity to meet the team during the year. They got to attend one hill training day, which was cut short due to a call out, but they did get to attend their first call out for a search in Coumshingaun in November. We were very glad of their numbers and delighted to be able to welcome them in person.

## Grants

SEMRA started two major projects in 2019 that were completed in 2020. Thanks to Leader funding, we were able to extend our base building to include an operations room, training room and proper welfare facilities. The extension was completed at the end of September and despite our best efforts, we have not been able officially open it yet due to Covid restrictions. However, we are extremely proud of it and look forward to a time when we can open the doors and welcome everyone in.

We also received CLAR funding to replace our mobile base vehicle (Victor). A brand new Mercedes Benz Sprinter 314 LWB van was purchased from Surehaul (Irl) in Clonmel and fitted out to our specification by Primo Coachworks in Ferbane. Victor 3, along with the new trainees, had its first call out in November. It is a huge step up in our base vehicle both in space and technology.

Covid-19 has affected the team in many ways, not least fund raising. No flag days and the Long Way Round looked less and less possible. It was a huge relief when we received the Covid support grant, it means we can continue to provide the emergency service which has been more needed than ever before.





Team Chair: Helen Mhic Chonmara  
Training Officer: Mick Grant  
Website: [www.sardaireland.com](http://www.sardaireland.com)

# Search and Rescue Dog Association

36  
CALLOUTS



17

Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) Ireland is a national voluntary SAR organization specialised in the training and deployment of search and rescue dogs. Our dog teams, which consist of the handler and their dog, can be tasked to search for injured or missing persons anywhere in Ireland and are effective in mountains, woodlands, rural and urban areas, waterways and seashore.

We currently have 6 fully qualified mountain rescue search dog teams, increased from 4 in the last year, and hope to have another dog on our callout list in the coming months. We have 24 official members, including honorary and dogs body members, and expect this to rise in 2021.

## Call Outs

Our 6 qualified dog teams responded to 36 callouts in 2020 in counties such as Carlow, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Mayo, Meath, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford, and Wicklow. Many of these searches were conducted alongside other agencies such as An Garda Síochána, Irish Coast Guard, Civil Defence, National Ambulance Service and Mountain Rescue. Our main tasking agency in 2020 was An Garda Síochána, in addition to other teams such as SEMRA and GOIMRT/DWMRT. SARDA dog teams are available to assist all mountain rescue teams throughout the country as required.

We would like to congratulate Search Dog Murphy and handler Éadaoin, who had 2 finds this year, and we thank all our handlers for their dedication to the team.

## Training

Traditionally, our dogs are graded to the 'mountain rescue search dog' standard. These air-scenting dogs can be used to search through large areas very quickly and effectively for human scent. In recent years, SARDA Ireland have

also launched a programme to train trailing search dogs. Trailing dogs are 'scent-specific' and need a scent article belonging to the missing person. These dogs are trained to follow a specific scent and to eliminate competing scents, human and otherwise, that do not match the missing persons sent profile. The trailing programme is being developed with the support of the NSARDA, the umbrella group which connects SARDA Ireland to sister teams in the UK.

## Public Interest

We are happy to say that there has always been a large interest from the public to support or get involved with SARDA Ireland. Many have volunteered as 'dogsbodies' (those who hide on the hills for our dog teams) and to assist with fundraising.

## Fundraisers

We were fortunate enough this year to have been able to hold our annual street collection day in Cork City last January, which raised a total of €9,508. Our social media following has grown this year, and we are grateful to all who created fundraisers and donated, raising a total of €4,155 in 2020. The Big Bark Podcast also selected us as one of their beneficiaries for their fundraiser this year, which resulted in a donation of €400, and increased awareness of our charity.

We thank all those who assisted SARDA in 2020 and we look ahead to 2021 with a growing team of committed members.

## Remembrance

In the early part of 2020, Koiru, one of our retired search dogs passed away after a long and wonderful life. This dog was loved by her owner, and treasured by the entire SARDA Team.



# Galway Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Eamon Hartley  
Team Leader: Michael Casserly  
Website: [www.gmrt.ie](http://www.gmrt.ie)



12  
CALLOUTS

Annual Report 2020

## Training

Much of GMRT's training moved online in 2020, particularly during the lockdowns. Virtual training using Google Meets covered many of the normal training topics including medical matters, aspects of technical rope rescue and navigation theory. Virtual training sessions were also carried to inform team members on aspects of MR technology such as SARCall and SARLoc, water awareness and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). Virtual training was supplemented with socially distanced face-to-face training when possible to ensure maintenance of critical skills such as patient packaging and transport as well as PPE donning/doffing and COVID-19 response demo sessions. GMRT members normally undertake a significant amount of external training but this was limited in 2020 to first aid certifications as well as MRI run rigging courses and the party leader course.

## Grants

GMRT grant spending this year was focused primarily on equipment purchases, due the difficulties in undertaking external training. The Team's usual funding sources were supplemented by a grant from Galway Wind Farm which allowed the purchase of essential COVID-19 related PPE including masks and goggles.

## Equipment

GMRT embarked on a process of replacing and augmenting rigging equipment in 2020; this included new ropes, harnesses and various specialist items of kit. Additionally, a project to standardise and upgrade the level of PPE and other items provided to team members has included the purchase and issue of new helmets, goggles, gloves, flashlights, slings, karabiners and digital VHF radios to each individual member. Along with the recent issue of new specialist Mountain Equipment Kongur MRT jackets to members, this has now ensured that every GMRT member is as well-equipped as possible.

## Capability Development

GMRT has focused on a number of areas for capability development in 2020. A formal process of setting up a sub-committee and production of reports and other items has ensured that the team remains at the forefront of mountain rescue medical and technical rescue matters.

## Fundraising

GMRT was unable to hold its traditional fundraisers due to COVID19, these include quizzes and bag packing events and particularly the Flag Day, normally on the October Bank Holiday weekend. Additionally, our "Howl at the Moon" night walk, planned for Hallowe'en night, was instead replaced by a virtual event running from October through to the end of the year.





Team Chair: Mary Walsh  
Team Leader: Dr. Shane McGuire  
Website: [www.mayomrt.com](http://www.mayomrt.com)

# Mayo Mountain Rescue Team

23  
CALLOUTS



2020 was an extraordinary year. Mountain Rescue Teams are used to making plans, constantly revising them as conditions outside our control dictate. The impact of Covid 19 on the way the team operated and socialised was profound. It was necessary to make significant changes in our daily lives and team activities.

We had to purchase additional equipment to cope with Covid, this included PPE and a new second set of lightweight waterproofs to ensure the team could respond to multiple taskings in one day, which was needed. We were unable to fulfil our annual fundraisers, like other teams, with our 'Hike in the Night' and flag days being cancelled. These are normally our staple funding sources along with donations, so we relied upon grants to get through the year. We received €25,525 in the DTTAS grant and €7,500 from the LEADER grant for our continued EFR training. While Covid reduced our callouts, nature abhors a vacuum, and, on cue, the Charities Regulator 'Code of Governance Report' and 'Google Workspace' moved in to fill the void. Our secretary has climbed a mountain of paperwork to ensure that the team meets the Charities Code of 6 Principles and 49 Core Standards which we are required to meet, and report on in 2021. This has necessitated the development of more policies and more plans. 'Google Workspace' has consolidated our paperwork and ensured the team administration runs securely and efficiently in the cloud.

We had to adapt to the ongoing situation, like a call out, which necessitated the creation and implementation of a variety of Covid-19 related protocols to ensure we could continue to operate in a safe and sustainable way. We did this in creative and innovative ways. As a result, we were able to respond to all callouts during the year. A real concern was team members becoming in-operative in case of a Covid contact. It is an achievement that we are proud of, to have maintained full operational status with the protocols in place all year.

Though some aspects of team activities like training were curtailed, the depth of knowledge, skills and experiences that we have, enabled the team to get through the year in good shape. The team missed the collegiality and warmth of having face to face meetings in the same room and being able to interact with each other in a meaningful way. Using Zoom and other remote meeting platforms, while useful, is no substitute for meeting in person.

We have also worked consistently well with our rescue partners; the Coast Guard, An Garda Síochána, Civil Defence, Order of Malta Ambulance Corps, and the HSE, which has ensured that casualties received a swift and professional transfer to Hospital where their injuries were treated.

The team has been tested and challenged in 2020 in a way that no one could have foreseen. The challenges presented by Covid-19 have been met and we continue to provide a first-rate rescue service to everyone who requests it. This is something that we will continue to do. It is the *raison d'être* of the Mayo team.



# Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Christopher Taylor  
Team Leader: Ciaran Davis  
Website: [www.sligoleitrimmrt.ie](http://www.sligoleitrimmrt.ie)



16  
CALLOUTS

## Annual Report 2020

2020 was a difficult year for the mountain rescue community in Ireland, and like our colleagues across the island the Sligo-Leitrim struggled significantly with reduced fundraising and tougher callouts due to the precautions demanded by COVID19. Nevertheless the team dealt with an increased number of callouts and maintained operational readiness throughout.

The team responded to 16 callouts, including 9 rescues and 3 searches in collaboration with other MRTs, An Garda Siochana, the National Ambulance Service and the Coastguard. This marked an uptick in the number of callouts and included lower limb injuries, cragfast individuals and missing persons, fully exercising the teams skills.

Notably the uptick occurred during periods of restrictions being lifted which makes it likely that the team will need to prepare for the same in 2021, and thus the team feels that consideration should be given to including MR responders in the rollout of vaccines to emergency service personnel.

Thanks in part to the streamlined callout process afforded by SARCALL we have worked more closely with the tasking agencies and we look forward to further cooperation with them in the future.

Despite the restrictions imposed by COVID19 the team was also able to undertake 17 internal training sessions both online and in person as guidance allowed. The team attended the national exercise on Croagh Patrick and this constituted the only external event or training the team attended. We remain hopeful that 2021 will see us return to more integrated training with our fellow teams. The team would like to thank our probationary members who are patiently spending more time than normal in probation to make up the training required to become a full member.

Across callouts, training and other operational activities the team undertook more than 1900 hours of activity, which under the circumstances has been an excellent turnout over the year. The leadership of the team continues to be impressed at the commitment the membership has shown over the past year.

The team would like to thank our colleagues in Mountain Rescue Teams across the island, An Garda Siochana, the National Ambulance Service and the Coastguard for their continued support and commitment to staying safe and still undertaking rescues in this difficult time.







Team Chair: Kevin Maguire  
Team Leader: Garret Wilson  
Website: [www.facebook.com/DonegalMRT](https://www.facebook.com/DonegalMRT)

# Donegal Mountain Rescue Team

24  
CALLOUTS



Donegal Mountain Rescue Team provides an emergency response for the remote and inaccessible areas of Donegal. The team currently have 22 members. Dmrt were tasked a total of 24 times throughout 2020 and seen one of our busiest Julys on record with a total of six callouts. Currently DMRT have 17 members trained to REC 3 level first aid and (phecc) CFR with another two trained to EFR level and one EMT.

As we move into 2021, we currently have 5 new members waiting to commence their probationary training year and hopefully complete the team assessment in December and move on to the callout list, we wish them well.

## Training

In the first couple of months of 2020 the team were busy on the hills training and focused on day and night navigation along with First aid training with 5 members completing REC 3. But as March arrived so did lockdown which saw the team quickly adapting to online training and desktop exercises including Search Management, Communications and Scene Preservation.

As the Counties levels of locked down when up and down we also adjusted our training to keep the practical skills fresh for all members whilst now wearing appropriate PPE and social distancing. One member of Dmrt also successfully completed the Rescue 3 Rope Rescue Technicians course with 5 completing Mountain skills 2 and two other members commencing their Mountain Leader Training.

## Callouts

Callouts this year were a mix between lost walkers on the mountain to lower leg injuries to missing vulnerable people. With the arrival Of Covid-19 this changed the way Dmrt also conducted callouts with most team members now having to travel to callouts using their own means of transport which put added cost on team members.

## Donegal Volunteer Centre Award

Donegal Mountain Rescue Team were immensely proud this year to receive the Volunteer Group Award from the Donegal Volunteer Centre in recognition for the work the team does.

## Vehicles

Dmrt currently have 4 vehicles. Three vehicles are 4-wheel drive with one incident control unit. All vehicles are kitted out with the same response equipment.

## Fundraising

This year seen our annual fundraising events cancelled due to Covid-19 but Dmrt would like to express our thanks to the many people who made donations throughout the year to the team.

As we look to the year ahead already there are plans for team members to complete Mountain Skills Assessment, Mountain Leader training and two members are planning on attending a CISM course with a steep ground rope course also planned.



# Kerry Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Jimmy Laide  
Lead Co-ordinator: Cathal Cudden  
Website: [www.kerrymountainrescue.ie](http://www.kerrymountainrescue.ie)



## Callouts & Covid

The coronavirus pandemic presented the team (as with society in general) with a new set of challenges in 2020. The risks associated with the transmission of the virus to and from team members and casualties on the hill was, and still is, very high. The team introduced new protocols for training and callouts earlier in the year, addressing the Covid risks to ensure the safety of team members and our families, as well as the casualties we encounter on rescue operations.

Overall, the team dealt with 30 incidents to year end 2020, which is significantly lower than average on account of the imposed lockdowns and travel restrictions throughout the year. However, consequently the majority of callouts were concentrated into a relatively short period over the busy summer months and into early autumn. The team handled a wide range of incidents from search and recovery operations to technical evacuations of casualties with a variety of injuries and medical issues. The majority of callouts were in the McGillicuddy's Reeks, with a number of incidents also dealt with on the Dingle and Beara Peninsulas.

The team issued a number of public safety alerts during the year following trends observed with poorly equipped parties (summer and winter).

## Training

The team continued to train regularly throughout the year on a collective and individual basis in accordance with the relevant public health guidelines. Training sessions during the year focussed primarily on search and night navigation exercises, first aid, stretcher evacuations, and the co-ordination and management of dynamic callout scenarios. Training highlights during the year included a winter skills refresher in Scotland back in February (B.C!!), and Emergency First Responder training in Autumn. Our technical and equipment committees carried out detailed reviews on our systems and processes with a view to continuously improving the team's technical

capabilities, and ensuring that all equipment is fit for purpose and in good order.

## New Base Extension Project

With the introduction of a new incident control vehicle towards the end of 2019, we have outgrown our existing base and a project is underway to extend the base in 2021 to provide additional storage space and a new training room. Planning permission was recently granted for the extension and we are looking forward to commencing building works in the coming months, all going well.

## Fundraising

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has kindly donated funds to the team during the year, especially given the circumstances of the pandemic and the financial impact that it has had so far. The team relies heavily on donations to cover running costs including base and vehicle maintenance, technical equipment, medical supplies, insurances and communications. We greatly appreciate the continued support of the public, mountaineering community and local businesses in this regard.

Finally, we would like to wish our colleagues in MRI, Coastguard, AGS and the Ambulance service a very Happy and Healthy New Year.





# SMALL CHANGE BIG DIFFERENCE

Mountain rescue teams are only possible due to the commitment of the volunteers who dedicate to being on call 24/7/365 to assist those in need.

These volunteers achieve this with minimal state support, and assume the costs of their own time and effort. We are required to reach out to the public to ask for support for the work that we do.

Please visit our website and give what you can.

[www.mountainrescue.ie/donate](http://www.mountainrescue.ie/donate)

donate  
today





# Saving Lives in the Mountains

24 / 7 / 365



[mountainrescue.ie](http://mountainrescue.ie)

Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI), Head Office, c/o Irish Sport HQ  
National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Ireland