

## National Community Smoke Alarm Scheme Launched in Ennis, County Clare

*Mr. Tony Killeen, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, today launched a national community fire safety programme at Ennis Fire Station in County Clare.*

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Mr. Tony Killeen, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, today launched a national community fire safety programme at Ennis Fire Station in County Clare.

Under the 'Community Smoke Alarm Scheme', which is an extension of a pilot scheme launched last year, the Department will provide funding to each local authority for smoke alarms for 500 households. It is envisaged that 250 homes will be targeted in 2007 and 250 in 2008. Two self-contained 10-year smoke alarms will be installed in each household. To date approximately 3,000 households have benefited under the scheme and up to 18,000 could benefit by the end of next year.

The objective of last year's pilot Smoke Alarm Scheme was to identify households who have no smoke alarms and who would not be captured by any other measures. In the main the households were identified by the voluntary sector, the local authorities provided the smoke alarms, which were funded by the Department and the voluntary groups installed the alarms. The fire services assisted the directors by providing practical advice.

Addressing those in attendance at today's official launch of the Scheme in Ennis, Minister Killeen said, "Over the last 2 years, community fire safety programmes have been developed under the Fire Services Change Programme. These programmes are designed to shift the focus from responding to fires, to involving the community at large in the task of preventing fires."

He explained, "The shift in the focus of fire services activities from response to prevention activity is happening all over Europe. International research has shown that the public can be quite detached about fire risk and do not always behave in a safe way. In contrast, they are very aware of crime and how to guard their homes against it. Our challenge, therefore, is to educate people that the danger posed by fire needs just as much attention."

"Information needs to be channelled through to the public in a readily accessible format. A key element of successful fire prevention is to provide the public with guidance on how to protect their families and homes from fire. We need to find out more about the causes of fires if we wish to highlight potential hazards for our communities. We need to ensure that every unit of residential accommodation in Ireland has a working smoke alarm. We need to encourage householders to know what to do if the alarm goes off in the event of a fire. We need to let people know that most fire fatalities occur in houses where there is no working smoke alarm. Over the last 2 years, we have been trying to meet these challenges", continued Minister Killeen.

Minister Killeen also commended the participants of the Primary Schools Programme, which was rolled out by the Department last year.

"This programme is being delivered by local fire fighters to all third classes across the country and is being well received. I understand that it has been a resounding success in Clare. I want to commend the Clare Fire and Rescue Service on their delivery of this programme and hope they will be as successful in the next year", concluded the Minister.

Research commissioned by the Department, shows that 20% of all households have no smoke alarm at all. Smoke alarms will not prevent the outbreak of fire but they will provide a warning. Most registered fire deaths are a result of smoke inhalation when people are sleeping. It can take as little as 3 minutes to die from smoke inhalation.

Any queries in relation to the roll out of the scheme in Clare should be directed to the Chief Fire Officer, Central Fire Station, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

**- END -**

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