

**Met Éireann**

**Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003**



**Guide to the Functions and Records of Met Éireann  
Section 15 Reference Book**

**Guide to the Rules and Practices of Met Éireann  
Section 16 Reference Book**

**Updated June 2006**

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## Section 15

### Introduction

### Background

The Freedom of Information Act 1997 establishes three statutory rights:

1. a legal right for each person to access information held by public bodies
2. a legal right for each person to have official information relating to him/herself amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading
3. a legal right to obtain reasons for decisions affecting oneself

The Act asserts the right of members of the public to obtain access to official information to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of individuals. This reference (book) has been prepared and published in accordance with the requirements of Sections 15 and 16 of the Act.

Section 15 of the Act requires each public body to publish general information on such issues as

- structure and organisation
- functions, duties and powers
- services provided to the public, and how these may be availed of
- classes of records held and arrangements for enabling the public to access such records under the FOI Act
- rights of review and appeal against decisions made under the Act

The FOI (Amendment) Act 2003 came into effect on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2003. This Act introduces a number of important amendments to the 1997 Act, notably in relation to Section 19 (Government Records), Section 20 (Deliberations of Public Bodies), Section 24 (Security, Defence and International Relations) and Section 47 (Fees).

The FOI Act allows public access to records which is not routinely available otherwise. Access to information under the Act is subject to certain exemptions and involves specific procedures and time limits.

Copies of this document are available free of charge from The FOI Officer, Met Éireann Headquarters, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9. Callers to this address can obtain copies, free of charge at reception. The document can also be accessed on our web site at <http://www.met.ie>

Under Section 16, the Act requires that a general description of the rules and guidelines used by the public body in implementing its schemes and programmes be published. The aims of this Section may be summarised as

- to assist the public in understanding more fully their rights and entitlements in relation to particular schemes and programmes
- to enhance public confidence in decision making
- to enable the quality and accuracy of the public body's interpretation and application of statutory provisions to be assessed

## **Routinely Available Information**

Met Éireann currently makes information and data routinely available to the public in relation to its functions and activities. Such information will continue to be available without the need to use the Freedom of Information Act.

Information on the functions and activities of Met Éireann may also be found on the Web site <http://www.met.ie>

The Freedom of Information Act is designed to allow public access to information held by public bodies which is *not* routinely available through other channels. Access to information under the Act is subject to certain exemptions and involves specific procedures and time limits.

## **Meteorological Data**

(Under the Freedom of Information Act, records which may be inspected, or a copy of which may be taken away, either free of charge or subject to payment of a fee, by a member of the public fall outside the scope of the Act.)

Met Éireann makes meteorological data available either free of charge (in pursuance of its public service role) or at an agreed price (as when customised data are made available on request). Hence, all meteorological data are available either free or subject to payment, and are therefore outside the scope of the Freedom of Information Act.

Accordingly, Freedom of Information requests for such records will normally be refused, and the requester will be informed that (having been advised that such) 'standard access' to these records is already available.

## **Mission Statement**

**Our mission is to monitor, analyse and predict Ireland's weather and climate, and to provide a range of high quality meteorological and related information to our customers.**

This Mission Statement implies that we, as the National Meteorological Service, will;

- help to ensure the protection and safety of life and property by issuing timely public weather forecasts and warnings
- contribute effectively to national prosperity and to Government objectives by supplying relevant meteorological services to all sectors of the economy
- ensure customer satisfaction by carefully analysing end-user feedback, and by continually improving the range and quality of our services,

- the cost-effectiveness of our operations and our overall standard of service
- foster a professional and supportive work environment which attracts, retains and develops committed employees
  - ensure the maintenance of a high-quality and cost-effective meteorological infrastructure, consistent with national requirements and resources
  - meet the State's obligations to provide meteorological services to the aviation sector
  - enhance the quality of our climatological archives and provide easy and effective access to our databases
  - participate in the on-going development of meteorological science and its applications in collaboration with our European meteorological partners and with the wider international scientific community
  - contribute to the effective monitoring and good management of the natural environment

### **Freedom of Information & Confidentiality - Statement of Policy**

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003, it is the policy of Met Éireann to provide the greatest possible access to the records which it holds. Where a person supplying information to Met Éireann wishes it to be kept confidential, for commercial or other reasons, s/he should inform Met Éireann of this fact and specify the reasons. Met Éireann will use its best endeavours to hold such information confidential, subject to its obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information Act. In the case of a request for the release of such information under the Freedom of Information Act, Met Éireann will consult with the supplier before making a decision on whether or not to grant it. Should a decision be made to release such information against the wishes of a third party that third party has the right to appeal such a decision.

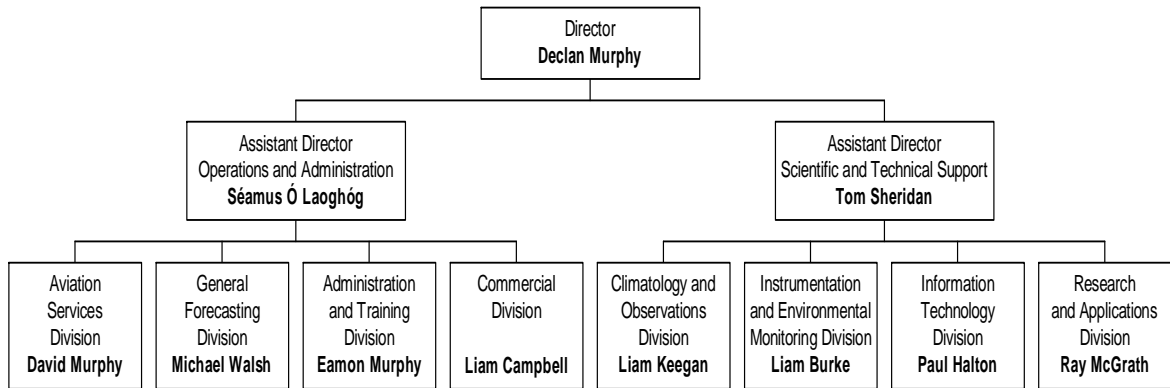
### **Assistance to Persons with a Disability**

The FOI Officer is available to provide assistance to persons with a disability to exercise their rights under the FOI Act (e.g. accepting oral requests from requesters who are unable to read, print and/or write due to their disability, enabling the requester to inspect or have records explained to him or her).

Met Éireann has a staff of approximately 235, working at 14 locations. It is organised in a divisional structure consisting of eight divisions as shown in the following diagram.

## Organisational Structure

Met Éireann Organisation Chart



## Description of Divisions

### 1 Director's Office

#### 1.1 Role of Office

The Director's Office acts as an administrative centre for the highest management levels in Met Éireann.

#### 1.2 Services delivered by Office

- 1 Administrative and secretarial support to the Director and Assistant Directors, including
  - tracking of correspondence
  - facilitation of meetings, including Management Committee (ManCom) meetings
  - co-ordination of briefing material
- 2 Maintenance of staff personnel files

### 2 Commercial Division

Head of Division: **Liam Campbell**

#### 2.1 Role of Division

The Commercial Division has two main responsibilities:

- to enhance the revenue earning potential of Met Éireann through professional marketing of its products and services
- to ensure that meteorological products of an appropriate range and quality are available to Met Éireann's public service customers

The Division seeks to broaden Met Éireann's customer base, while encouraging existing clients to increase their use of meteorological products and services. In co-operation with other Divisions it strives to improve the presentation and dissemination of existing products, to respond to customer demand for new services and to promote a high standard of customer care.

#### 2.2 Services delivered by Division

- 1 Discussions/negotiations with customers, potential customers and third parties by telephone, fax, post and face to face
- 2 Liaison with other Divisions to make required products available to customers
- 3 Liaison with ECOMET
- 4 Advertising
- 5 All aspects of Met Éireann involvement in shows and exhibitions, with support as required from other Divisions
- 6 Publication of Annual Reports

#### 2.3 Information Available

- 1 Copies of Annual Reports
- 2 Information leaflets
- 3 Details of standard forecast services

#### 4 ECOMET procedures and charges

##### *2.4 Where the information is available at present*

Head of Commercial Division, Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Phone: 01-8064244 • Fax: 01-8064247

##### *2.5 Classes of records held*

- 1 Details of correspondence, agreements etc. with individual customers
- 2 Information on market sectors (market research etc.)

### **3 Aviation Services Division**

Head of Division: **David Murphy**

#### *3.1 Role of Division*

The Aviation Services Division provides a wide range of services to civil, military and general aviation, in accordance with ICAO standards and recommendations and also national procedures decided on from time to time. It comprises the Central Aviation Office at Shannon Airport, at which the Head of the Division is normally based, together with the Meteorological Offices at Dublin, Cork and Knock Airports and at Casement Aerodrome. The Division is also responsible for services to a number of Regional Airports around the country. Aviation Services Division is the focal point for liaison between Met Éireann and the Irish Aviation Authority, the airport authorities, and the various international agencies insofar as their activities are concerned with aviation meteorology.

#### *3.2 Services delivered by Division*

- 1 Aviation specific weather information is provided at Shannon, Dublin, Cork and Knock Airport Meteorological Offices and at Casement Aerodrome
- 2 Self-briefing units for pilots are available at Dublin and Cork Airports (?)
- 3 Operational Meteorological information is transmitted on international telecommunication networks and available by telephone and fax (?) to general aviation users

#### *3.3 Information Available*

- 1 Details of available services may be found in the National Aeronautical Information Publication (A.I.P.)
- 2 User information is distributed in the form of Aeronautical Information Circulars (A.I.C.s) and Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs)

#### *3.4 Where the information is available at present*

Head of Aviation Services, Met Éireann, Shannon Airport, Co. Clare  
Phone: 061-471542 • Fax: 061-472737

#### *3.5 Classes of records held*

- 1 Records of forecasts issued (in accordance with ICAO regulations)
- 2 Correspondence on aviation matters with Irish and international



organisations

3 Correspondence regarding service requirements with airlines and air operators

## **4 Information Technology (IT) Division**

Head of Division: **Paul Halton**

### *4.1 Role of Division*

The Division is responsible for the provision and development of most of Met Éireann's computing and telecommunications facilities, and for the maintenance of agreed IT standards in relation to computing activities devolved to other Divisions.

### *4.2 Services delivered by Division*

- 1 Operation of IT production systems
- 2 Maintenance of IT hardware, software and communications systems
- 3 Development of IT policy; planning for the future IT needs of Met Éireann
- 4 Procurement of IT equipment and software
- 5 Development and implementation of new IT systems
- 6 IT training and user support

### *4.3 Information Available*

- 1 Statements of Strategy on IT issues relating to Information, Technical Architecture and Applications
- 2 Annual Work Plans

### *4.4 Where the information is available at present*

Head of IT Division, Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Phone: 01-8064261 • Fax: 01-8064247

### *4.5 Classes of records held*

- 1 Reports of IT work
- 2 Documents and correspondence related to IT planning, organisation and training
- 3 Correspondence on IT matters with Irish and international agencies
- 4 Information on procurement of IT equipment
- 5 Correspondence on technical matters connected with the supply of data to customers

## **5 General Forecasting Division**

Head of Division: **Michael Walsh**

### *5.1 Role of Division*

The Division supplies a wide range of forecast services and weather warnings through the Central Analysis and Forecast Office (CAFO) and the RTÉ Weather Office. Customers include the media, industrial and commercial concerns, Government and semi-State bodies, local authorities, the general public, and other users of such information. The Division is also responsible for liaison with customers as regards their day-to-day requirements.

### *5.2 Services delivered by Division*

- 1 Weather forecasts and warnings for land and sea
- 2 Radio, television and newspaper weather services
- 3 Premium rate telephone and fax weather services
- 4 Consultancy weather forecast services
- 5 Warning service in relation to Ultra Violet Radiation and Ground Level Ozone
- 6 Weather-related advice to State Agencies in emergency situations - for example severe weather, nuclear accidents or toxic spillages

### *5.3 Information Available*

- 1 Satellite and radar reference manuals
- 2 World Meteorological Organisation manuals
- 3 Forecasting techniques reference books
4. Weather observations and forecasts.

### *5.4 Where the information is available at present*

Head, General Forecasting Division, Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Phone: 01-8064208 • Fax: 01-8064275

### *5.5 Classes of records held*

- 1 Operational office notices
- 2 Records of forecasts and weather warnings issued

## **6 Instrumentation and Environmental Monitoring Division**

Head of Division: **Liam Burke**

### *6.1 Role of Division*

The Division has overall responsibility for the acquisition and maintenance of instruments and equipment. It is also responsible for operations at Valentia Observatory, and for Met Éireann's environmental monitoring activities.

### *6.2 Services delivered by Division*

- 1 Provision of technical solutions to meet operational meteorological requirements

- 2 Procurement of equipment
- 3 Maintenance, repair and calibration of sensors and systems
- 4 Operation of Valentia upper-air station
- 5 Operation of geophysical and environmental monitoring programmes
- 6 Laboratory chemical analysis of air and rainfall samples

- 7 Quality control and analysis of data
- 8 Provision of data to World Databanks

#### *6.3 Information Available*

- 1 Guide to Meteorological Instruments and Methods of Observation (World Meteorological Organisation)
- 2 Other relevant World Meteorological Organisation Manuals
- 3 Meteorological Service for International Air Navigation - Annex 3 (International Civil Aviation Organisation)

#### *6.4 Where the information is available at present*

Head, Instrumentation and Environmental Monitoring Division  
 Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
 Phone: 01-8064259 • Fax: 01-8064247

#### *6.5 Classes of records held*

- 1 Correspondence, internal memoranda, discussion documents, reports, instrumentation documents, procurement documents, contracts
- 2 Geophysical and atmospheric chemistry data

## **7 Climatology and Observations Division**

Head of Division: **Liam Keegan**

#### *7.1 Role of Division*

The Division's main responsibility is to function as the national centre for climatological information.

#### *7.2 Services delivered by Division*

- 1 The inspection, maintenance and development of Met Éireann's synoptic, climatological and rainfall station networks
- 2 Reception, logging, quality control and archiving of data received from these networks
- 3 Management of computer-based data archive
- 4 Responding to customer requests for climatological data
- 5 Liaison on climatological matters with the World Meteorological Organisation
- 6 Representing Met Éireann on relevant national and international bodies
- 7 Climatological publications

#### *7.3 Information Available*

- 1 Data on Irish weather and climate ranging from conditions at particular times to long-term averages and trends
- 2 A computer-based archive of weather data extending from 1941 onwards. Hourly and daily values of weather elements such as rainfall, temperature, wind and sunshine are stored. These are used to

provide particular information required by clients as well as general descriptions of Ireland's weather and climate  
3 Pre-1941 data are available mostly in original registers or in a range of publications. Data for the latter part of the 19th century as well as the 20th century are available

#### *7.4 Where the information is available at present*

Climate Enquiries Desk, Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Phone: 01-8064260 • Fax: 01-8064216

#### *7.5 Classes of records held*

- 1 Records of inspection of synoptic, climatological and rainfall stations
- 2 Records of responses to requests for climatological data
- 3 Correspondence with national and international agencies on climatological and hydrological matters
4. Records of weather observations

## **8 Research and Applications Division**

Head of Division: **Ray McGrath**

#### *8.1 Role of the Division*

The Research and Applications Division undertakes fundamental and applied research within the context of Met Éireann's overall goals and responsibilities. The main driving force for selecting research projects is the need to provide weather forecasts and related services of ever-greater accuracy and detail. Current research efforts are directed towards (a) improving operational weather forecasts through the development of more accurate numerical weather prediction models and (b) deriving a range of meteorological application products for the general public, agriculture, environment, industry and the marine sectors. The Division also has responsibility for Met Éireann's library services.

#### *8.2 Services delivered by Division*

- 1 Fundamental research, mainly within the HIRLAM scientific programme
- 2 Operational maintenance of HIRLAM and WAM models
- 3 Graphics software systems development
- 4 Specialist product development to support the operational offices
- 5 Agrometeorological, environmental and marine support services
- 6 Operation and maintenance of Met Éireann's national meteorological library
7. Climate Change project (C4I)

#### *8.3 Information available*

- 1 Details of Met Éireann's participation in the HIRLAM project
- 2 User information on existing HIRLAM and WAM data, and on agroclimatological, marine and environmental studies undertaken by Met Éireann
- 3 Verification data on HIRLAM and WAM forecasts
4. Details of Met Éireann's participation in the C4I project

#### *8.4 Where the information is available at present*

Head, Research and Applications Division  
Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Phone: 01-8064204 • Fax: 01-8064247

#### *8.5 Classes of records held*

- 1 Correspondence relating to participation in national and international research initiatives
- 2 Correspondence with agricultural and marine interests
- 3 Library catalogues

### **9 Administration and Training Division**

Head of Division: **Eamon Murphy**

#### *9.1 Role of the Division*

The Division has overall responsibility for financial, budgetary, personnel, supplies and accommodation matters

It exercises responsibilities in the context of liaison between Met Éireann and staff representative associations. The Division co-operates closely with the Personnel and Finance Units of the parent Department (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG)). The Administration and Training Division also has responsibility for the training functions of Met Éireann. In consultation with the other Divisions it seeks to identify training needs and to plan for their fulfilment. The Division liaises closely in these matters with the Corporate Development Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. It also works closely with those in other Divisions of Met Éireann who from time to time may be engaged in providing training of various kinds, and with staff at Casement Aerodrome who are involved in meteorological training.

#### *9.2 Services delivered by Division*

- 1 Liaison with the DEHLG particularly in the areas of human resources management and budgetary matters
- 2 Overall administration of financial and accounting systems
- 3 General liaison with a range of international organisations (WMO, ECMWF, EUMETSAT)
- 4 Maintenance of Met Éireann's general filing system
- 5 Organisational planning, especially in relation to the Strategic Management Initiative
- 6 Maintenance of accommodation and furnishings
- 7 Supervising and monitoring the implementation of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989.
- 8 Planning and implementation, in consultation with Division Heads, of staff training and development programmes
- 9 Negotiations and agreements with staff representative bodies
- 10 General secretarial support services
- 11 Provision of general offices supplies and other consumables
- 12 Responsibility for FOI requests.
13. Implementing employment-related legislation.

### 9.3 Information available

1 Information on career opportunities in Met Éireann

2 Staffing details

### 9.4 Where the information is available at present

Head, Administration and Training Division  
Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Phone: 01-8064206 • Fax: 01-8064247

### 9.5 Classes of records held

- 1 Budgetary, staff and financial records
- 2 General correspondence with various international organisations and other national meteorological services
- 3 Details of discussions and correspondence concerning accommodation matters
4. Correspondence with DEHLG
5. Performance Management details

## Rules and Practices

### 1 Provisions of the Freedom of Information Act

Under the Freedom of Information Act, anyone is entitled to apply for access to information not otherwise publicly available. Each person may seek

- access to records held by Met Éireann
- correction of personal information relating to him/herself held by Met Éireann where it is inaccurate, incomplete or misleading
- reasons for decisions made by Met Éireann directly affecting him/herself

*The following records come within the scope of the Act:*

- all records relating to personal information held by Met Éireann irrespective of when created
- personnel records of serving staff created from 21 April 1995 and those created prior to that date where the records are being used or proposed to be used in a manner which adversely affects or may affect the person involved
- all other records created from the commencement date of the Act, i.e. 21 April 1998
- any other records necessary to the understanding of a current record, even if created prior to 21 April 1998

### 2 Applications under the Freedom of Information Act

In Met Éireann, applications under the Freedom of Information Act will be handled centrally and should be addressed in the first instance to Mr. J. Bourke, Freedom of Information Officer, Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9,

## How to get Information

Freedom of Information requests will be dealt with by nominated officers (known internally as decision makers). Met Éireann's decision makers are Mr. Colm Faherty (Senior Meteorological Officer) and Mr. Séamus Daltún (Principal Meteorological Officer).

*Note: In certain circumstances, charges may be levied in respect of the supply of information (See Section 8 below).*

### 3 Compiling your Application

- (a) Your request must be in writing and should indicate that the information is sought under the Freedom of Information Act
- (b) If you require a reply in a particular format (photocopy, computer disk etc.) please mention this in your application
- (c) Please be as detailed and specific as possible when compiling your application, as this will assist Met Éireann in dealing with it. If you have any difficulty in preparing your application Met Éireann's staff will be happy to assist
- (d) You may be required to prove your identity, especially when seeking personal information (e.g. by production of birth certificate, passport, driving license etc.)
- (e) Please include a day-time telephone number so that you may be contacted if it is necessary to clarify details of your request  
In normal circumstances, Met Éireann is obliged to respond to a request within 4 weeks.

### 4 Rights of Review and Appeal

The Act sets out a series of exemptions to protect sensitive information where its disclosure might damage key interests of the State or of third

parties. Where Met Éireann invokes these provisions to withhold information, the decision may be appealed. Decisions in relation to deferral of access, charges, manner of access, etc. may also be the subject of appeal. Details of the appeals mechanisms (Internal Review and Review by the Commissioner) are given below.

#### 3 Internal Review

You may seek internal review of the initial decision, which will be carried out by an officer at a higher level, if

- a) you are dissatisfied with the initial response received i.e. refusal of information, manner of access, charges, etc., or
- b) you have not received a reply within 4 weeks of your initial

application. This is deemed to be a refusal of your request and allows you to proceed to internal review

Met Éireann has an Internal Review Board comprising three members: Mr. Liam Burke (Senior Meteorologist), Dr. James Hamilton (Meteorologist) and Mr. David Fitzgerald (Principal Meteorological Officer) Internal review in relation to initial decisions taken on Freedom of Information applications relating to personnel records will be carried out by the Head of the Administration and Training Division.  
*All requests for internal review should be submitted in writing to:*  
Mr. J. Bourke, Freedom of Information Officer,  
Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Phone: 01-8064246 • Fax: 01-8064247

Requests for internal review must be submitted within 4 weeks of the initial decision. Met Éireann must complete the review within 3 weeks. Internal review must normally be completed before an appeal may be made to the Information Commissioner.

#### *4 Review by the Commissioner*

Following completion of internal review, you may seek independent review of the decision from the Information Commissioner. Also, if you have not received a reply to your application for internal review within 3 weeks, this is deemed to be a refusal and you may appeal the matter to the Commissioner. Appeals in writing may be made directly to the Information Commissioner at the following address: Office of the Information Commissioner, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2  
Phone: 01-6785222 • Fax: 01-6610570

## **Fees**

There are basically 2 types of charges that apply under the Freedom of Information Act:

### 1. Fees that accompany a request for a record or a review of a decision:

A fee of €15 must accompany a request for records other than records containing only personal information relating to oneself. A reduced fee of €10 applies in relation to such a request if you are covered by a medical card. Neither fee applies if the request is for personal information relating to oneself.

A fee of €75 must accompany most applications for internal review of a decision of a public body. A reduced fee of €25 applies if you are covered by a medical card. There is no fee for internal review applications concerning only personal information relating to oneself or in relation to a decision to impose a fee or deposit.

A fee of €150 must accompany most applications for review by the Information Commissioner. A reduced fee of €50 applies if you are covered by a medical card or in relation to a review concerning certain third party information. There is no fee for review applications concerning only personal information relating to oneself or in relation to decisions to impose fees or deposits.

### 2 Fees/deposits in relation to the cost of search and retrieval and copying of records released.



Requesters can also be charged for the time spent finding records that are to be given to them, and for any photocopying costs incurred by the public body in providing material to the requester. Such costs are very unlikely to arise in the case of personal information. Requesters cannot be charged for the time spent on deciding whether or not to grant their request.

A deposit may be payable where the total fee is likely to exceed €50.79. In these circumstances, the public body must, if requested, assist the member of the public to amend the request so as to reduce or eliminate the amount of the deposit.

Charges for search and retrieval and copying may be waived in the following circumstances:

- where the cost of collecting and accounting for the fee would exceed the amount of the fee;
- where the information would be of particular assistance to the understanding of an issue of national importance; or,
- in the case of personal information, where such charges would not be reasonable having regard to the means of the requester.

## **Freedom of Information (Fees) Regulations 2003**

### **Summary**

Regulations have been made by the Minister for Finance prescribing fees for the purposes of section 47(6A) of the Freedom of Information Act 1997.

The following fees will apply to FOI requests under section 7 of the FOI Act (requests for access to records) and applications under section 14 (internal review) and section 34 (review by Information Commissioner) received on or after **7 July 2003**:

### **Requests for records**

- o A standard application fee of **€15** must accompany an FOI request under section 7 for a record or records containing non-personal information..
- o A reduced fee of **€10** applies if the person making such a request is covered by a medical card.

The following requests/applications are exempt:

- (a) a request under section 7 for a record or records containing only personal information related to the requester.
- (b) an application under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).
- (c) an application under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).

### **Internal Review**

- o A standard fee of **€75** must accompany an application for internal review under section 14.
- o A reduced fee of **€25** applies if the person making the application is a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder.

The following internal review applications are exempt:

- (a) an application in relation to a decision concerning records containing only personal information related to the applicant.
- (b) an application in relation a decision under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).

- (c) an application in relation to a decision under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).
- (d) an application in relation to a decision to charge a fee or deposit, or a fee or deposit of a particular amount.

**Review by Information Commissioner**

- o A standard fee of **€150** must accompany applications to the Information Commissioner for review of decisions made by public bodies under section 34.
- o A reduced fee of **€50** applies if
  - (a) the person bringing the application is a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder or
  - (b) the person is specified in section 29(2) i.e. a third party with the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner where a public body decides to release their information on public interest grounds.
- o The following applications to the Information Commissioner are exempt:
  - (a) an application concerning records containing only personal information related to the applicant.
  - (b) an application in relation a decision under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information)
  - (c) an application in relation to a decision under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).
  - (d) an application in relation to a decision to charge a fee or deposit exceeding €25.00 under section 47 in respect of search and retrieval and photocopying of records (decisions in relation to the charging of fees or deposits for search and retrieval and/or photocopying of less than €25 are not subject to review by the Information Commissioner).
  - (d) an application in relation to a decision to charge a fee under section 47(6A), or a fee of a particular amount under section 47(6A), on the grounds that the records concerned do not contain only personal information related to the requester or the requester is not a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder.

| <b>Type of Request/Application</b>   | <b>Standard Fee*</b> | <b>Reduced Fee **</b> |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Request for a record</u>  |                      |                       |
| Initial Request  | €15                  | €10                   |
| Internal Review  | €75                  | €25                   |
| Review by Information Commissioner   | €150                 | €50                   |
| Request for a record or containing personal information  | No charge            | No charge             |
| Application under section 17 for amendment of a record containing incorrect, incomplete or misleading personal information | No charge            | No charge             |
| Application under section 18 for the reasons for a decision affecting the individual                                       | No charge            | No charge             |

*\* Fee will not apply where a person appeals a decision to charge a fee or deposit, or a fee or deposit of a particular amount under section 47 of the FOI Act*

*\*\* Reduced fee will apply in respect of third parties who appeal a decision of a public body to release their information on public interest grounds*

## Frequently Asked Questions concerning Fees

### Freedom of Information (Fees) Regulations 2003

#### **When do the regulations commence?**

The regulations are effective as and from 7 July 2003 and apply to FOI requests and review applications received from that date.

#### **What is the position in relation to requests or review applications received before that date?**

Requests or review applications received prior to 7 July 2003 are unaffected.

#### **Are the new fees additional to fees for search and retrieval and photocopying of records?**

Yes. These fees are prescribed under section 47(6A) of the FOI Act and are additional to fees and deposits that can apply under section 47 in respect of search and retrieval and photocopying of records released to a requester.

#### **What happens if a fee is not paid?**

The request is liable to be refused under section 10 of the FOI Act on the grounds that a fee payable under section 47 has not been paid. However before refusing a request on these grounds, public bodies should give the requester the opportunity to proceed with the request. The following paragraph is suggested for inclusion in acknowledgments issued in response to requests for non-personal information that are unaccompanied by the appropriate fee:

*A fee of €15 is required before processing of your FOI request can begin. This fee can be paid by cheque, bank draft or order payable to [public body]. A reduced fee of €10 applies if you are covered by a medical card in which case you should supply details of the medical card registration number and issuing health board together with your consent to the verification of these details with the relevant health board.*

#### **What happens in the event of a dispute with a requester as to whether or not a request is for personal information?**

If the dispute cannot be resolved, the requester should be informed of the decision that a fee is payable and advised of their right to apply for a review of that decision under section 14.

#### **There is no charge for internal review applications in relation to decisions on charging of amounts of fees or deposits.**

The request itself should be refused under section 10 on the grounds that a fee under section 47(6A) has not been paid. If the decision to charge a fee is overturned at internal review or subsequently by the Information Commissioner, the decision to refuse the request should be deemed to have been unjustified and the request should be reactivated with immediate effect.

#### **How do public bodies establish if a requester is covered by a medical card?**

While public bodies are encouraged to inform users of the Act of their entitlements, there is an onus on the requester both to claim medical card coverage when making a request and to provide appropriate evidence in support of such coverage. Evidence could include details of the medical card registration number, issuing health board and the consent of the person making the request to the verification of the details with the health board.

#### **What if there is evidence to suggest that a third party is using a medical card holder to make a request on his or her behalf?**

The regulations exclude from the definition of "medical card holder" and "dependant of medical card holder" *a person who is making a request on behalf of some other person who, in the opinion of the head, is seeking to avoid the payment of a standard fee.*

**What happens in the event of disputes in relation to a medical card holder?**

Where a requester purporting to be covered by a medical card has failed to establish that fact to the satisfaction of the head, h/she should be informed of the decision that the standard fee is payable and advised of their right to apply for a review of that decision under section 14.

**There is no charge for internal review applications in relation to decisions on charging of fees or deposits.**

The request itself should be refused under section 10 on the grounds that a fee of a particular amount payable under section 47(6A) has not been paid. If the decision to charge the standard fee is overturned at internal review or subsequently by the Information Commissioner, the request should be reactivated with immediate effect.

**What is the position in relation to requests for a mixture of personal and non-personal information?**

The exemption for records containing personal information (and for any subsequent review under section 14 or 34) applies to a request for a record or records containing *only* personal information related to the requester. If a requester decides to proceed with a 'mixed' request, s/he is liable for the same fee as applies to requests for non-personal information.

**Is there provision for refund of the new fees?**

The regulations provide that a fee under section 47(6A) shall be refunded if the requester withdraws a request or an application for review, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Act (sections 7(8), 14(8) or 34(5)).

Fees are not refundable if a decision is varied or annulled at internal or external review stage.

## **Section 16**

### **Introduction**

Met Éireann is a service provider, and does not implement schemes or programmes which may be availed of by the public. This section is accordingly limited to describing some general features of Met Éireann's operations.

### **Background**

Met Éireann was established by the State in 1936 to meet the requirements of the new transatlantic air services from Foynes. While the initial ten to fifteen years of its existence were mainly devoted to providing services to the expanding aviation sector, Met Éireann gradually broadened its forecasting activities to meet the needs of a wide spectrum of users of weather information - including agriculture, marine, industry and the communications media.

A core activity of Met Éireann has been the collection of climatological data from around the country - from the full-time meteorological stations operated by Met Éireann itself, and from small rainfall and climatological stations run by co-operating public service agencies and by private individuals - so as to build up an archive of data sufficient to describe the climate of Ireland.

Since the late 1950s Met Éireann has maintained an increasing involvement in environmental monitoring - for example, measuring radioactivity levels in air and rainfall and assessing concentrations of acid rain. The monitoring of stratospheric ozone and ultra-violet radiation are the latest additions to these environmental activities.

Met Éireann has always been an integral part of the Civil Service. Currently it is attached to the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

### **Tendering procedures**

The award of contracts by Met Éireann is in accordance with the guidelines published in 'Public Procurement', 1994 Edition, obtainable from the Government Publications Sales Office. IT contracts are additionally subject to procurement norms contained in Department of Finance advisory notes, guidelines and templates, as updated from time to time.

### **Operations**

Met Éireann's operations are regulated or influenced by its membership of several international organisations:

#### 1 World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)

The World Meteorological Organisation is a specialised agency of the United Nations. Based in Geneva, it provides the authoritative scientific voice on the state and behaviour of the Earth's atmosphere and climate. The purposes of WMO are to facilitate international co-operation in the establishment of networks of stations for making meteorological, hydrological and other observations; and to promote the rapid exchange of meteorological information, the standardisation of meteorological observations and the uniform publication of observations and statistics. It also furthers the application of meteorology to aviation, shipping, water problems, agriculture and other human activities, promotes operational hydrology and encourages research and training in meteorology. All Met Éireann's weather observing systems, and its procedures for the routine exchange of weather data, operate in conformity with WMO regulations.

## 2 International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)

ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of civil aviation in the world. A specialised agency of the United Nations, it sets international standards and regulations necessary for the safety, security, efficiency and regularity of air transport and serves as the medium for co-operation in all fields of civil aviation among its 187 contracting States.

*Among its other functions, ICAO*

1 develops, adopts and amends international standards in all matters related to the operation of aircraft, airworthiness and the numerous facilities and services required in their support

2 establishes, with the co-operation of States, regional air navigation plans

3 creates standards for and helps States with aviation security

4 assists, through technical co-operation activities, resource-scarce States to meet ICAO standards

5 collects and publishes world aviation statistical data and economic studies

6 drafts international air law conventions

7 monitors the impact of civil aviation operations on the environment and develops relevant standards

All of Met Éireann's services to civil aviation are governed by ICAO regulations.

## 3 The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts is an international organisation based in Reading, England. It is supported by eighteen European States: Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom. The Centre has concluded cooperation agreements with Croatia, Iceland, Hungary and Slovenia.

*The principal objectives of the Centre are:*

1 the development of numerical methods for medium-range weather forecasting

2 the preparation, on a regular basis, of medium-range weather forecasts for distribution to the meteorological services of the Member States

3 scientific and technical research directed to the improvement of these forecasts

4 collection and storage of appropriate meteorological data

*In addition, the Centre:*

1 makes available a proportion of its computing facilities to its Member States for their research

2 assists in implementing the programmes of the World Meteorological Organisation

3 provides advanced training to the scientific staff of the Member States in the field of numerical weather prediction

4 makes the data in its extensive archives available to outside bodies

ECMWF output is received daily by Met Éireann, and forms the basis of

all medium-range forecasts (i.e. 3-7 days ahead).

#### 4 European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT)

EUMETSAT is an inter-governmental organisation created through an international convention agreed by 19 European States : Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece,

##### **Operations**

Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. These States fund the EUMETSAT programmes and are the principal users of the systems.

EUMETSAT also has co-operation agreements with many other States.

EUMETSAT's primary objective is to establish, maintain and exploit European systems of operational meteorological satellites. EUMETSAT is responsible for the launch and operation of the satellites and for delivering satellite data to end users as well as contributing to the operational monitoring of climate and the detection of global climate change.

Established in 1988, EUMETSAT's headquarters are located at Darmstadt, Germany. Within a decade it has become a well-established organisation with direct responsibility for the operation of its satellites in orbit and with new programmes to ensure the continuity of observations. At the same time it has become one of the major partners in satellite systems for observing the entire planet, enabling Europe to play its proper role in monitoring global weather and climate. Its success has not only ensured the availability of key satellite data for Europe but also for many developing countries which now rely on its data and systems.

In Met Éireann, satellite data are an essential aid to the human forecaster in the routine diagnosis of weather developments, and also form an important input to the numerical weather prediction systems.

#### 5 The international HIRLAM (High-Resolution Limited-Area Model) project

The international HIRLAM project is a co-operative venture between the Nordic countries, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland. Its aim is to develop and maintain a numerical short-range weather forecasting model for operational use by the participating institutes. The HIRLAM project is controlled by the HIRLAM Council, which consists of the directors of the

participating institutes, and the project is managed by a Management Group. The HIRLAM model is run four times daily on Met Éireann's computer systems in Glasnevin. Each model run provides the forecasters with guidance for 48 hours ahead.



## 6 European Co-operation in Meteorology (ECOMET)

ECOMET is an Economic Interest Grouping (EIG) under EU law. The objectives of the EIG are

- to improve the free exchange of data sets and products between members
- to assist members to maintain and improve their infrastructure
- to expand the availability of meteorological information within the ECOMET territory
- to maintain and improve the quality, increase the use and improve the distribution of data, products and services of members of the grouping
- to create the conditions for members of the grouping to develop their economic activities

Met Éireann is a member of ECOMET and its commercial activities are in accordance with ECOMET rules.

## 5 European Meteorological Network (EUMETNET)

EUMETNET is a relatively recent development, and is intended to be a loose network of co-operation between European national meteorological services (NMSs). The NMSs will identify topics on which they might usefully collaborate and will, on a voluntary basis, agree to participate in specified projects. For each project one NMS will act as the co-ordinating and administrative centre and may also do the development work. The fruits of the co-operation will be available to all the participating NMSs.

## Glossary of Terms

**CAFO** - The Central Analysis and Forecast Office in Glasnevin. This is the principal operational office of the General Forecasting Division.

**CAO** - The Central Aviation Office at Shannon Airport. This is the principal operational office of the Aviation Services Division.

**C4I** - Community Climate Change Consortium for Ireland

**ECMWF** - The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, in Reading, England. Eighteen European states are members of ECMWF, which provides routine forecast guidance and conducts an extensive basic research programme.

**ECOMET** - European Co-operation in Meteorology (ECOMET) is an Economic Interest Grouping within the European Union.

**EUMETSAT** - The European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites, based at Darmstadt in Germany.

**HIRLAM** - The High-Resolution Limited-Area Model. This is a sophisticated short-range weather prediction model, developed by a consortium of the Nordic countries, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland.

**ICAO** - The International Civil Aviation Organisation, an agency of the United Nations, sets international standards and regulations for civil aviation.

**SYNOPTIC NETWORK** - The network of weather observing stations (staffed and automatic) which produce hourly weather reports.

**WAM** - A high-resolution wave model run operationally by Met Éireann.

**WMO** - The World Meteorological Organisation, an agency of the United Nations which regulates and co-ordinates international collaboration in meteorology.