

# **Met Éireann**

## **CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN 2003 - 2006**

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## FOREWORD

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The measure of the success of any organisation is how well its products and services meet the needs of its customers. Met Éireann, Ireland's National Meteorological Service, recognises that reliable weather forecasts and information about Ireland's climate are an essential requirement of modern social and economic life. In response to this, we supply a wide range of services to the general public, government agencies, aviation interests, the emergency services and many industrial and commercial concerns. Our aim is to provide customers, not merely with a 'good' service, but with one which meets their requirements in an optimum manner and which anticipates their future requirements.

In presenting this Customer Action Plan, we set out our strategy for meeting this objective during the coming years.

We all know that there are limitations inherent in any weather forecasting system, but Met Éireann will always strive to supply its customers with products of the best possible scientific quality. Equally important, we will seek to engage customers in a process of consultation and participation, through both formal and informal channels. We will invite them to express their views on our operations, suggest enhancements to our range of services, propose better delivery methods - in short, to tell us what *they* require.

The role of our staff is critical in delivering high-quality service, especially those front-line staff who deal directly with customers. We will seek their views on all aspects of customer relations, and provide appropriate training programmes to improve further the professionalism and courtesy which have always characterised Met Éireann's approach to customer service.

During the coming years Met Éireann will be called upon to deliver an ever-wider range of services to a diverse and growing customer base. I am confident that the principles of Quality Customer Service which this Plan seeks to implement will help us meet the challenge.

Declan Murphy  
Director

## SUMMARY

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### *Highlights of Customer Action Plan*

During the period 2003-2006, Met Éireann's commitment to Quality Customer Service will be reinforced by:

- An on-going commitment to ensuring the highest standards of courtesy and professionalism in all dealings with customers.
- Closer involvement of end-users in the planning and monitoring of Met Éireann's services.
- Continual review of all aspects of customer relations by the Staff Customer Service Panel.
- An enhanced staff training programme in the area of Quality Customer Service.
- Regular publication of verification statistics, showing the level of accuracy of Met Éireann's forecasts.
- Explicit standards for delivery of Met Éireann services, covering general forecasting, aviation forecasting and climatological services.
- New product presentation formats and delivery systems to match customer requirements.
- Further development of Met Éireann's website as a source of information for customers.
- Monitoring and responding promptly to customer feedback through the Customer Liaison Officer.

## OUR CUSTOMERS AND SERVICES

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As the National Meteorological Service, Met Éireann takes the leading role in the State on all matters relating to weather analysis and prediction. We provide weather forecasts, warnings, and a range of climatological and environmental services to the general public and to all sectors of the Irish economy. We are the principal adviser to the Government on all meteorological matters, and participate on behalf of the State in the development of international meteorological collaboration.

### ***Our customer base is very broad and includes:***

- the general public
- the media
- national and local government agencies
- the emergency services
- the Defence Forces and the Garda Síochána
- aviation interests
- environmental protection and management agencies
- sporting and leisure organisations
- all sectors of the economy, especially agriculture, marine, construction, energy, transport, legal/insurance, retailing and tourism
- academic and research institutes
- international meteorological institutes with whom we exchange information

### ***We provide a comprehensive range of meteorological services:***

- public weather forecasts and weather-related warnings
- a wide range of tailored weather forecasts
- forecasts for aviation in accordance with international agreements
- forecasts and warnings for the marine area
- a comprehensive range of climatological services
- a programme of environmental monitoring, including geophysical measurements, air and precipitation sampling, monitoring of ultra-violet radiation and stratospheric ozone measurements
- a national meteorological library

## VALUING THE CUSTOMER

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Met Éireann's Mission is '*To meet the national requirement for high-quality weather forecasts and associated services, with optimum efficiency and value for money*'. We are committed to engaging with all our customers to ensure that they receive the service most suited to their needs.

Met Éireann is conscious that customers may nowadays receive meteorological information from several different sources. This has served to increase our determination to operate to the highest scientific standards, while at the same time treating all customers in a courteous and professional manner.

Through the Staff Customer Service Panel, management and staff will identify and remedy any deficiencies in customer relations procedures. Senior management will demonstrate their own personal commitment to Quality Customer Service by creating among staff an awareness of the importance of the customer to the success of the organisation.

### ***Equality/Diversity***

Met Éireann is committed to treating all customers equally whilst at the same time respecting individual differences and needs. Diversity and difference on the bases of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief and membership of the Traveller Community will be taken into account, where appropriate.

A policy on Equality/Diversity in Met Éireann will be developed in 2003 and made available to all customers.

### ***Dealing Directly with Customers***

Most customers who contact Met Éireann do so by telephone. Substantial numbers of letters, faxes and e-mails are also received. Relatively few personal callers visit our offices.

To help ensure a consistently high standard of service, the following principles for dealing with customers will be adopted. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are appended to each principle.

#### **Telephone**

- All calls will be answered courteously and as promptly as possible, bearing in mind that during periods of bad weather the volume of calls increases substantially. Staff will normally identify themselves to the caller.  
*KPI: 90% of calls will be answered within 10 seconds (4 rings).*
- Voicemail will be used with discretion - its purpose is to allow callers to leave a message outside normal office hours or if staff are unavoidably absent.  
*KPI: All voicemail greetings will conform to a standard, and include an option to contact the operator for further assistance.*

- If a staff member is unable to deal with a customer's query, s/he will attempt to transfer the call to someone who can. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made to return the call.

**KPI:** *All customer calls which cannot be dealt with immediately will be logged and follow-up procedures will be put in place to ensure customer satisfaction.*

- Internal phone directories will be kept up-to-date.

**KPI:** *The internal phone directory will be reviewed and updated monthly.*

### **Written**

- Where practicable, all correspondence will be dealt with within 5 working days.

**KPI:** *90% of correspondence dealt with within 5 working days.*

- An interim response will be issued if it appears likely that more than 5 working days will be required for a substantive response.

**KPI:** *95% of correspondents satisfied.*

- All written communications issuing from Met Éireann will include the staff member's name, telephone number and e-mail address where applicable.

**KPI:** *100% of correspondents satisfied.*

### **Visitors**

- All areas open to visitors will be maintained to a suitable standard of cleanliness, comfort and safety.
- As far as is practicable, provision will be made for access by people with disabilities. (Such access already exists at Headquarters/Glasnevin Hill).
- Reception staff will be informed when a visitor is expected and the appropriate staff member will greet them punctually.
- Private office accommodation will be made available when necessary where visitors may meet with staff.

**KPI:** *No complaints from visitors.*

### **Service through Irish**

- Correspondence received in Irish will be answered in Irish.
- Every effort will be made to accommodate telephone callers and visitors who wish to conduct their business through Irish.
- Front-line staff will be provided with an up-to-date list of Met Éireann personnel who are proficient in Irish.

**KPI:** *Customers who wish to transact business through Irish will be satisfied with the service they receive.*

## **CONSULTATION WITH CUSTOMERS**

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To help deliver Quality Customer Service it is vitally important that we solicit the views of our customers, to ensure that our products and services are and continue to be relevant to their needs.

The most important source of feedback is that which we receive directly from our end-users. All front-line staff are encouraged to listen to customer comments, note any perceived deficiencies in products or services, and provide feedback to the Customer Liaison Officer and to the appropriate Head of Division.

In recent years Met Éireann's website has become an important channel for monitoring clients' views, and for making available documents such as Press Releases, Statement of Strategy, Business Plan, Annual Reports etc. This usage of the website will continue to be developed during the lifetime of this Plan.

Customer consultation will also be addressed through a number of more focused initiatives:

### **Surveys**

In 2001 Met Éireann commissioned a professional survey of public attitudes to the products and services it provides. The results showed that Met Éireann is widely recognised as the principal provider of weather services in Ireland. A majority of respondents expressed approval of the style and content of forecasts, and of the contribution made by Met Éireann's forecasts to safety and to the routine organisation of work and social activities.

The survey generated much useful information which will be utilised by Met Éireann in planning the future development of weather forecasting services.

The public survey will be repeated during the period of this Plan.

### **Exhibitions and Shows**

Over the past years Met Éireann has established a presence at several major shows and exhibitions (e.g. National Ploughing Championships, Boat Show). These have proved invaluable as a source of direct feedback from important customer groups.

Participation in such events will continue, and Met Éireann will seek to exploit appropriate new opportunities in this area.

### **Collaboration with Major Customers**

On-going liaison is maintained with several major user groups (in agriculture, the media, the marine industry etc.) through direct contact with appropriate specialist staff in Met Éireann. In several cases Met Éireann personnel participate together with industry representatives on working groups etc., aimed at maximising the contribution of meteorological services to commercial success. These contacts will be maintained, and if possible expanded, in the coming years.

## **Other Options**

Standards of customer service are an on-going concern of Met Éireann's Partnership Council, and its sub-group the Staff Customer Service Panel. A number of initiatives are currently under consideration to further enhance the customer consultation process. These include

- Establishment of a Customer Liaison Panel to maintain contact with all segments of Met Éireann's customer base.
- Convening occasional seminars at which invited customer representatives could discuss their requirements with Met Éireann staff and senior management.

## **ROLE OF OUR STAFF**

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One of the principal aims of this Plan is to create within Met Éireann a greater awareness of the importance of its customers. All staff have a role to play in developing a Quality Customer Service ethos within the organisation, but front-line staff - those with whom customers deal directly - have a particular responsibility.

### ***Consultation with Staff***

Recognising the crucial role of staff in delivering Quality Customer Service, Met Éireann's Staff Customer Service Panel will

- heighten awareness among all staff of the need for Quality Customer Service
- strengthen staff motivation by engaging in meaningful consultation
- consider new strategies for enhanced service
- challenge values and assumptions which may be inhibiting quality service
- suggest changes in organisational behaviour/practices which would contribute to improved customer service

The Panel will meet at least twice yearly. A representative selection of staff across all grades will be invited to participate. The discussions and recommendations of the Panel will contribute to the overall planning process, and Panel members will be given regular feedback on the response of management to their views.

### ***Staff Reward Schemes***

Within the context of existing reward schemes (the Merit Awards scheme and the Staff Suggestion scheme) particular recognition will be given to performance and suggestions which contribute directly to improved Quality Customer Service.

### ***Customer Service Training***

Met Éireann's Training and Development Committee will review customer service training requirements, particularly in relation to front-line staff, and will prioritise training delivery in this area.

## SETTING STANDARDS

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To ensure consistent delivery of high-quality service, Met Éireann will establish measurable standards by which performance can be assessed on an on-going basis. The Staff Customer Service Panel will be consulted regarding the development, monitoring and review of these standards.

### ***Standards for Forecast Quality***

The forecast issued 'yesterday' can be compared with 'today's' weather conditions and a variety of statistical scores derived which indicate the quality of the forecast - i.e., how accurately it predicted the weather which actually happened. While these scores show wide day-to-day variation - some weather situations are inherently more predictable than others - average scores over months or seasons have improved steadily in recent years.

This improved performance has resulted from advances in the atmospheric sciences, from better weather observation systems (satellite, radar) and especially from the development of powerful computers, which run elaborate mathematical models of the earth's atmosphere.

In partnership with the Netherlands, Spain and the Nordic countries, Met Éireann runs a sophisticated short-range weather model (HIRLAM - the High Resolution Limited-Area Model) providing forecast guidance up to 2 days ahead. Through Ireland's membership of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) Met Éireann also has access to the best available forecasts for the range 3 - 7 days.

Met Éireann has established a comprehensive verification process to monitor the quality of the forecast guidance provided by HIRLAM. The quality of the main morning forecasts transmitted on RTÉ Radio 1 is assessed using a new verification scheme recently implemented in General Forecasting Division. (This scope of this scheme will be extended in the near future to include additional weather parameters and forecast timesteps).

The verification scheme for terminal area forecasts (TAFs) will continue to be used in the Aviation sector.

### ***Standards for Service Delivery***

Many of the services provided by Met Éireann have a direct bearing on the safety of life and property. The standards for service delivery must therefore be extremely high. Weather forecasts are never static - they evolve continuously as new observations and computer guidance are received - so it is vitally important to have in place systems which will deliver the most up-to-date weather information as soon as it becomes available.

### **General (i.e. non-aviation) forecasts**

1. The General Forecast Office in Glasnevin will continue to maintain a 24-hr, year-round service.
2. The premium-rate telephone weather forecasts will be updated at least three times daily. Premium-rate fax products will be updated promptly as new weather charts become available.
3. 90% of requests for contract forecast services will be implemented within 5 working days, provided they are based on standard forecast products.
4. For contract requests which require development work prior to implementation a timetable will be agreed in advance with the customer, subject to the availability of necessary staff and other resources. At least 90% of such contracts will be delivered to the agreed schedule.
5. A logging and analysis system will be implemented to monitor forecast transmission times, and any shortcomings will be remedied as quickly as possible.

### **Aviation forecasts**

1. The Central Aviation Office at Shannon Airport will continue to maintain a 24-hr, year-round service.
2. Met Éireann will continue to supply a full range of meteorological services to meet the needs of national and international aviation interests, including the provision of weather services to the Air Corps, Garda Síochána and Search and Rescue operations.
3. Premium-rate access services by telephone and fax will continue to be provided for the general aviation sector, including
  - A system to enable customers to request pre-assigned lists of products e.g. Meteorological Aviation Reports (METARs), Terminal Area Forecasts (TAFs), Forecasts of Significant Weather (SIGMETs) and Significant Weather charts.
  - Customer access to personal briefings by the Central Aviation Office forecasters.
4. Self-briefing units (SBUs) enable easy access to aviation weather data for pilots and airline personnel. Currently, such units are installed at Dublin, Cork, Knock and Sligo Airports, at Finner Camp and Casement Aerodrome. Additional units are planned for Shannon and Waterford Airports.

Progress is already well advanced on replacing the existing SBU system with a more comprehensive web-based service.
5. The Aviation Services Division will achieve ISO 9000 accreditation within the period of this Plan.

### **Climatological services**

1. The Climate Enquiries Office will normally be staffed during regular office hours - i.e., 09.15 - 13.00 and 14.15 - 17.30 (17.15 on Fridays).

2. Routine requests for climatological data will receive a response within 5 working days.
3. More complex enquiries, which take longer to process, will generally receive a response within 10 working days. Customers will be advised if the response time is likely to exceed 15 working days.
4. The range of climatological data made available on Met Éireann's web site will be kept under review.

## PRODUCT DELIVERY AND PRESENTATION

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Met Éireann will explore with its customers their particular presentation and delivery requirements, and as far as possible will commit the necessary resources to match product output to customer needs.

### ***Improved Presentation and Delivery Services***

- In order to obtain maximum benefit from Met Éireann's services, many customers require data to be delivered in a prescribed, standard format. Every reasonable effort will be made to match output style - whether for text, tabular or graphical products - with the customers' requirements.
- Met Éireann will further develop its website as a delivery medium for products and services. The use of other e-media formats (SMS, MMS etc.) will also be investigated.
- The existing premium-rate telephone and fax services will be maintained and expanded through the inclusion of additional products.
- Credit Card and Credit Transfer payment facilities will continue to be available to Met Éireann's commercial customers.
- Met Éireann will develop further its range of informational, educational and promotional material.

## DEALING WITH CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

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As with all service delivery organisations, Met Éireann may be subject to comments regarding the quality of the service itself or the manner of its delivery. As befits a customer-oriented organisation we will adopt a positive attitude towards all comments/complaints, treating them as an extension to the customer consultation process.

The scope for customer dissatisfaction will be reduced as far as possible by maintaining excellent scientific and technical standards, by well-focused staff training programmes and by openly acknowledging the limitations as well as the benefits of available services.

Inevitably, however, complaints will sometimes arise, and Met Éireann's Customer Liaison Officer will ensure that they are dealt with in a consistent, open and fair manner.

### ***Complaints Procedure***

- Met Éireann's Customer Liaison Officer is the central contact person to whom customers will be directed if they have a complaint or grievance. The Customer Liaison Officer will also arrange to process complaints/comments which may be received, whether formally or informally, by other staff members.
- When a complaint is received by the Customer Liaison Officer, a substantive response will normally be sent to the customer within 5 working days. An interim response will be issued immediately if it appears likely that more than 5 working days will be required for a substantive response.
- Where investigations show that a complaint has arisen from faulty processes or procedures, these will be remedied as quickly as possible.
- All complaints will be logged and analysed by the Customer Liaison Officer, and the results disseminated throughout the organisation.
- Despite major advances in weather forecasting techniques, meteorology remains an inexact science. There will be occasions (hopefully very few) when our forecasts are seriously in error; we will seek to explain to our customers why such failures occur and the efforts which we constantly make to improve forecast quality.

Customer Liaison Officer contact details:

Customer Liaison Officer, Commercial Division, Met Éireann,  
Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
Tel. 01-806 4244  
Fax. 01-806 4247  
E-mail: [customer.liaison@met.ie](mailto:customer.liaison@met.ie)

## CORPORATE INFORMATION

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Met Éireann, Valentia Observatory, Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry  
Tel: +353-66-947 3460 Fax: +353-66-947 2442

Met Éireann, Connaught Airport, Knock, Co. Mayo  
Tel: +353-94-67368 Fax: +353-94-67390

## **ANNEX - FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

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The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act came into effect on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1998. Met Éireann is subject to this Act and has designated officers to deal with FOI requests. Comprehensive information is available on the Met Éireann website at [www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie)

### **What is Freedom of Information?**

The FOI Act gives individuals the right to request access to records held by Met Éireann. You do not have to give a reason as to why you want to see any records. You are entitled to an explanation if you are not given what you ask for. A decision on your application must normally be made within 4 weeks.

### **What can I ask for?**

You can ask for the following records held by Met Éireann:

- Any records relating to you personally, whenever created.
- All other records created after 21 April, 1998.

Note: A 'record' can be a paper document, information held on computer, printouts, maps, plans, microfilm, microfiche, audio-visual material, etc. Access to the personal information of another requires the written consent of that person. The provisions of the FOI Act do not apply to records, a copy of which is available for purchase by members of the public – Met Éireann's climatological records would fall into this category.

### **Can I appeal against the decision?**

Yes. If you are not satisfied with the decision on an FOI request you may ask for 'internal review' of the decision. A more senior officer will review your application. You will be informed of the result of this review within 3 weeks. If you are not satisfied with the decision on 'internal review', you may ask the Information Commissioner to review the matter.

### **Do I have to pay for the information?**

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 Table summarises the main fees that must accompany 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. For more complete details please consult <http://www.foi.gov.ie>. (Note that requesters can also be charged for the time spent finding records that are to be given to them, and for any photocopying costs incurred. Such costs are very unlikely to arise in the case of personal information).

## Summary of Charges to accompany FOI Requests

Type of Request/Application	Standard Fee*	Reduced Fee **
Request for record containing non-personal information		
Initial Request:	€15	€10
Internal Review:	€75	€25
Review by Information Commissioner:	€150	€50
Request for a record containing only 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

## How do I make a request to Met Éireann for access to information under the Freedom of Information Act?

### Contact

FOI Officer, Administration and Training Division, Met Éireann,  
 Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9  
 Tel. 01-806 4246  
 Fax. 01-806 4247  
 E-mail: [foi@met.ie](mailto:foi@met.ie)

stating clearly the information you require, that you are requesting the information in accordance with Section 7 of the Freedom of Information Act 1997, and enclosing the appropriate fee.

### For further information

A booklet explaining the application and appeal procedure is available from Met Éireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9, or you can download a PDF version at <http://www.met.ie/aboutus/publications/default.asp>. The Freedom of Information Act is available from the Government Publications Sales Office, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.