

DES Circular 0001/2019

Leave for Teachers who are members of Voluntary Search & Rescue Organisations

The first circular of 2019 was issued by the DES with guidance provided to Boards of Management on the granting of leave for teaching staff that are members of Voluntary Search and Rescue Organisations. A synopsis of the circular is provided in an FAQ format.

1. Who is eligible to apply for leave to attend a search & rescue operation?

From 1 January 2019, permanent, CID and fixed-term teachers (including non-casual substitute teachers) who are members of voluntary search and rescue organisations are eligible to apply to the Board of Management for approved leave to attend a search and rescue operation. It is advisable that a Board of Management develop and maintain a policy pertaining to this leave. The circular is subject for review during the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 school year.

Note: This leave is not available to attend training courses.

2. How does a teacher apply for leave under this category of absence?

A teacher availing of this leave to attend a search and rescue operation is required to provide the Board of Management with evidence of the 'call out' as soon as possible after the rescue operation, but no later than one week after the teacher's return to work. All documentation relating to the leave must be retained by the Board of Management in the teacher's personnel folder. Evidence of membership of the voluntary organisation should be provided by the teacher when requested by the Board of Management.

3. Does this circular apply to all voluntary search & rescue organisations?

A teacher must be a member of one of the following organisations to avail of approved leave:

- Irish Coast Guard
- Royal National Lifeboat Institution
- Community Inshore Rescue Service
- Irish Water Safety
- Mountain Rescue Ireland

4. How many days is a teacher eligible to avail of?

No more than 5 days in any school year. An absence for part of a day is counted as one day of leave.

5. Can a school put a substitute teacher in place?

A teacher can avail of 5 days special leave with pay and substitution costs which will be paid by the DES

6. How do I record the leave on OLCS?

It is advisable to contact OLCS directly on 090 64893779 for advice on how to record the leave on their system