

Rallying and Safety

Special Stage Rallying is the most popular form of Motorsport in Ireland and it continues to grow in popularity all the time. There are many reasons for this, one being the fact that events can last from eight hours for a single day, to as long as twenty-four hours of competition on a three day event.



Special Stage Rallies take place on "stages" which are closed to the public. Events are decided by the time taken to complete a particular route. It is generally over the "stages" that events are won and lost, when competitors have to drive over the closed roads as fast as they can in order to produce the quickest time. The less time you take, the fewer penalties you incur. Special Stage Rallies take place all around the country, with approximately 30 events being held throughout the year.

I am often asked about being a safety officer and a rally driver? The first thing I must say is that safety is never about not doing a job or activity. Rather it is all about doing the job or activity *safely*. Ireland leads the world when it comes to safety in rallying, every rally has a safety plan and a governing body will appoint a Safety Officer. I was the first safety officer to a national rally back in the mid 1980`s.

Before a competitor can enter their car in a rally it must first pass scrutiny, to pass scrutiny the car must have a full crash protection cage, a fire fighting system, competition seats with safety harness-type seatbelts and a laminated windscreen.

The driver and navigator will have to present for scrutiny flame proof overalls, balaclava, socks and boots, also crash helmets with intercoms and the driver must have fireproof gloves. All these items are of an international standard and have an expiry date.



Modified rally cars are based on ordinary family saloon cars. They are much tougher though and have extra strong chassis and many mechanical parts upgraded. They are fitted with special competition tyres to suit the varying road conditions. Rallying is a team effort with the driver and navigator being the core, the service crews can vary from one to three vans and cars with at least two people in each vehicle helping out. Most teams involve volunteers made up of family and friends. Testing is carried out from time to time on private roads and this is also an opportunity for team members to have a drive in the car.

We are always delighted when people approach us to talk about the car or the sport and I would like to thank everyone for their support and encouragement over the past year.

John Hackett
Safety & Environmental, Pinewood Healthcare, Waterford