

A day in the life of a Meteorologist

My night duty as weather forecaster in Met Éireann's forecast office begins at 10pm. On arrival in the forecast office I am briefed by the evening duty meteorologist. They will give a run down of the current weather situation and walk me through the forecast for the next week or so, highlighting any severe weather expected.

Once the evening duty departs I have a few busy hours ahead of me. I must prepare for the live radio broadcast scheduled just before midnight. I will need to analyse the forecast charts produced by computer forecasting models. These computer models predict atmospheric conditions like air pressure, temperature and precipitation. It is my job to assess this information and convert it into a format that can be easily used by our customers, the public.

Using the new model data and taking into account the current weather conditions I will update Met Éireann's national forecast, a concise text describing the weather for Ireland for the next 24 to 36 hours. This national forecast is posted on our web page (www.met.ie) and on RTÉ teletext. At 11pm a second forecaster comes on duty for the night I take some time to brief him fully.

My next task is to prepare a sea area forecast for the waters around Ireland focusing on the winds at sea over the coming 24 hours. Also, before midnight I need to prepare a radio script covering the expected weather over the next few days. Just before midnight I go into our small radio studio, just beside the forecast office. I phone up the sound desk in RTÉ Radio 1 and we do a sound level test. Shortly after I will go out live on air broadcasting the 1 minute general forecast script and the sea area forecast.

Between midnight and 3am the forecast office is rather quiet. I need to continue to analyse the weather, each hour we get reports in from Met Éireann's stations about the country. I need to ensure that the forecast is on track and make any amendments if necessary.

At 3am things get busy again and stay that way until my duty ends at 8.15am. New output from computer models will become available. Both forecasters on duty will analyse this data and will finalise the forecast for the day ahead as well as the outlook for the coming week. I will focus on the next 24 to 36 hours and if any severe weather is expected I will issue warnings. My colleague on night duty will concentrate on the longer range forecast and will write and record the forecasts used on our Weatherdial service. I will update Met Éireann's national forecast. I also need to produce an updated sea area forecast which I then broadcast just after 6am on RTÉ Radio 1. I will also prepare a radio script covering the general forecast for the coming week.

My final task is to deliver this forecast on Morning Ireland, just before the 8 o'clock news headlines. After this broadcast my relief will have arrived and after briefing them I can head home to bed!

Sarah O'Reilly

'...and if any severe weather is expected I will issue warnings.'



Sarah O'Reilly at work in Met Éireann has a degree in Theoretical Physics from Trinity College, Dublin and is studying for a PhD in Atmospheric Physics in NUI Galway.