

**PRESS RELEASE
IRISH WATER SAFETY**

21st March 2016

**Easter Appeal -
Ensure your child is wise to staying safe near water**

Half a million primary school children have started their Easter Holidays yet 90% of them may not know how to stay safe when playing near water. Irish Water Safety is calling for constant uninterrupted child supervision in aquatic environments and a greater uptake by schoolteachers of its primary school water safety programme, an official component of the curriculum.

Thirty-two children aged fourteen and under died in a decade of tragic drownings, sometimes silently and in a matter of seconds and in just a few inches of water, therefore it is essential that children receive constant uninterrupted supervision at aquatic environments.

Every year, Irish Water Safety issues 40,000 primary-school water safety certificates, meaning that more than 450,000 children have yet to receive this training even though much of the programme is easily delivered as it is classroom based with free resources. There is still time for teachers and parents to teach behaviours that will keep children safe from drowning during the summer months.

Constant responsible parental supervision guarantees child safety yet tragic drownings occur every year when children manage to escape the watchful eye of guardians. Children are naturally curious about water however therefore parents should check if their local primary school has yet introduced Irish Water Safety's Primary Aquatics Water Safety "PAWS" programme which is a component of the primary school curriculum that teaches children how to stay safe around water.

In an analysis of drownings over a 25-year period, specific risks came to the fore:

38% occurred in coastal regions. A full moon on Wednesday 23rd March will result in tides that will be both higher and lower than normal. Coastal walkers should be aware of the risk of being stranded and the dangers associated with exposed slippery areas. It is important to carry a fully charged mobile phone and be in the company of others. Remember your lifeline in an emergency is 112.

Anglers should be extremely vigilant when fishing from the shoreline of Atlantic swells and the associated dangers of stronger tidal streams. Five drowned in coastal and inland waterways in 2015.

62% of drownings occurred at inland water sites. Walkers should therefore stay well away from the edge of familiar waterside pathways that pose a risk of slipping and falling in.

A third of drowning victims had consumed alcohol therefore consumption is best left until after your activity.

Those boating should ensure that their family and friends wear a properly serviced and recently checked lifejacket at all times. When children are brought boating, it is essential that they wear a lifejacket and that the lifejacket has a crotch strap to avoid the possibility of the child slipping out through it. More online advice, geared towards children, is available at www.iws.ie

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