

24th April 2017

FIVE PER FORTNIGHT DROWN IN IRELAND RISKS INCREASE DURING BANK HOLIDAYS SO KNOW THE DANGERS

There are 133 drownings in Ireland every year – that's more than five per fortnight. As we approach the May Bank Holiday weekend, visitors to coastlines and inland waterways should be mindful of the dangers of cold shock, hypothermia and drowning. On Bank holiday weekends, people can become complacent and put themselves and their families in dangerous situations at aquatic environments.

People have a responsibility to themselves and family to stay safe around water by knowing the dangers and learning from the situations that have led to tragic drownings in the past:

- Always wear a Lifejacket when on water and ensure that it has a correctly fitted crotch strap. A recent IWS Report found that only 66% of the public wear a lifejacket. It is rare that somebody drowns when wearing one and if they do drown it is normally because of a malfunction or from being incorrectly fitted.
- Shore walkers should stay away from the edge and beach walkers should remain vigilant to the dangers of being stranded as the tidal range is significant with a new moon on Wednesday causing spring tides.
- Ensure that you are fully trained and competent for your aquatic activity. Find training providers at www.safetyzone.ie.
- Child safety requires constant uninterrupted supervision to avoid tragedy. Parents of primary school children should check if their local school has yet introduced Irish Water Safety's PAWS programme – Primary Aquatics Water Safety, which teaches children all about staying safe around water. The program is a non-compulsory part of the primary school curriculum and is key to reducing child drowning mortalities and injuries. Now is the time to instill good habits in time for the summer months ahead. These resources are available at <http://paws.iws.ie/>
- Anglers should be extremely vigilant of Atlantic swells and wear a lifejacket when fishing from the shoreline.
- Swimmers should swim parallel and close to the shore and be aware that water is still too cold for extended swims. Sea water temperature is approximately 11°C whilst fresh water temperatures are approximately 9°C
- Alcohol should be avoided before or during any aquatic activity. On average, a third of drowning victims had consumed alcohol.
- In a developing emergency situation, call 112 and ask for the Coast Guard. Always call early.

Irish Water Safety encourages everyone to take swimming, lifesaving, survival and rescue classes - for further information click on www.iws.ie. If you locate missing Ringbuoys then log on to www.ringbuoys.ie.

Media Enquiries to:

Irish Water Safety, The Long Walk, Galway

LoCall 1890-420.202 www.iws.ie

Tel: 091-564400 Fax: 091-564700

Mobiles: John Leech 087-6789600 Roger Sweeney 087-6789601