

# Press Release - Irish Water Safety

19 June 2017

## Calls for caution near water as ten drown monthly

### This Is National Water Safety Awareness Week

The number of drownings last year reached 123, more than ten every month. As this is National Water Safety Awareness Week (June 19 -25), Irish Water Safety is appealing to the public to avoid summer drowning tragedies by making water safety part of your conversation with family and friends.

Drownings can happen quickly and silently so this summer:

1. Swim at Lifeguarded waterways, listed at <http://www.iws.ie/bathing-areas/map.372.html>;
2. Swim with others, never alone;
3. Swim close and parallel to shore, within your depth;
4. Avoid sudden immersion in cold water as “Cold Shock” can be fatal;
5. Watch out for submerged hidden hazards - get in feet first;
6. Ask locally about dangerous currents and swim only where you know it’s safe;
7. Kids are naturally curious about water so make sure to supervise them closely at all times;
8. Never use inflatable toys in open water – they can drift out beyond your comfort zone;
9. When walking the shoreline watch out that you don’t get trapped by incoming tides;
10. Wear a lifejacket when boating or angling;
11. Water activities are risky if you’re not trained – if you plan to get in, on or under the water, get onto [www.safetyzone.ie](http://www.safetyzone.ie) to get recognised training.

Although 40,000 people live less than 100 metres from the coast and some 2 million people live within 5km of the coast (40% of the population), the majority of drownings, some 62%, actually occur inland at our rivers and lakes. 80% of drownings occur within the victim’s county, relatively close to their respective homes. Such statistics reinforce the importance of learning how to stay safe in, on and around water yet a recent IWS [survey](#) of 1,000 households established that over half of respondents did not possess an ability to swim at all or are uncomfortable doing so.

The vast majority of drownings last year, 82, were accidental. Drownings by suicide were 29 and 12 were of undetermined cause. Accidental drownings typically occur when people overestimate their own ability and underestimate the risk. In terms of risky behaviour, the adage “boys will be boys” appears to be reflected in the fact that 80% of accidental drownings were male.

Even so, people still overestimate their own abilities, reflected in the fact that last year, Lifeguards trained and assessed by Irish Water Safety prevented 649 people from drowning. Of equal concern is the tendency for some parents to leave children unattended at Lifeguarded waterways. Last year, 663 children were found lost and unaccompanied beside the water.

Enquiries: John Leech: 087-6789600; Roger Sweeney: 087-6789601

Irish Water Safety, The Long Walk, Galway Tel:091-56.44.00 Email: [info@iws.ie](mailto:info@iws.ie) Website: [www.iws.ie](http://www.iws.ie)