

300 people rescued each year on Irish beaches Child wristbands will help prevent drownings

To mark National Water Safety Awareness Week (17-23 June), Water Safety Ireland has sent wristbands to every primary school explaining Lifeguard flags in the hope of motivating more people to swim safely at lifeguarded waterways.

With over 300 people being rescued by Lifeguards every year, it is vital that every child knows what the Lifeguard flags mean and where it is safe to swim and that water safety should be part of the conversation with children before the summer holidays even begin.

The wristbands show the meaning of flags flown at lifeguarded waterways, explaining when it is safe to swim and when it isn't. By making every child aware of the dangers, they can become ambassadors in their own families, influence their behaviour around water and bring the number of drownings in Ireland down this summer.

Supporting the initiative, Beach Lifeguard at Lahinch in Co. Clare, Bernard Cahill, says he regularly sees children swimming outside the flags where it isn't safe. He tells the story of two young girls who rapidly found themselves in trouble. Luckily, Bernard managed to reach both girls in time, but said he felt the weaker of the two had taken her last breath just as he pulled her from the water. For Bernard, it was the most rewarding and scariest moment of his life. View Bernard's story here: <https://youtu.be/VLKgyuMYQTU>

"Water tragedies can be prevented by people taking basic precautions including staying within their depth; ensuring children are adequately supervised; and swimming where lifeguards are on duty or in safe swimming areas where ringbuoys are present," commented The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D., "The wristband initiative is a welcome and innovative example of educating children to enjoy water activities in a safe way and I urge people to visit www.watersafety.ie to inform themselves of the dangers of open water."

Media Enquiries to:

Water Safety Ireland, 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



Children from Inagh N.S. pictured with Lifeguard Bernard Cahill