

PRESS RELEASE: Water Safety Ireland

June 15 2020

Calls for caution near water as ten drown monthly

This Is National Water Safety Awareness Week

New figures released by Water Safety Ireland show that 105 people drowned in 2019 and that a total of 1,200 drowned in the last ten years, an average of ten every month. As Covid-19 related travel restrictions are eased, WSI points to the fact that 8 out of 10 drownings were within the victim's home county. To mark National Water Safety Awareness Week (June 15 - 21), Water Safety Ireland is appealing to the public to help reduce summer drowning tragedies by swimming within your depth, staying within your depth and supervising children closely.

"Good weather can lull people into a false sense of safety. However, the dangers that were there before Covid-19 are still there today", commented Martin O'Sullivan, Chairman of Water Safety Ireland. "As travel restrictions are eased, we are appealing to the public to swim at Lifeguarded waterways, to supervise children closely and never to use inflatable toys in open water."

"Drownings happen quickly and silently which is why children need to be closely and constantly supervised. Alcohol, a factor in one third of drownings, can lead to someone overestimating their ability and underestimating the risks. We are asking the public to mark National Water Safety Awareness Week by making water safety part of your conversation with family and friends so that we see a summer free of drowning tragedies."

1. As you socially distance, do not swim in areas that are unfamiliar and potentially unsafe. Swim at Lifeguarded waterways listed at www.watersafety.ie or at designated bathing areas that are traditionally known to be safe and have ringbuoys present.
2. Swim within your depth – stay within your depth.
3. Water temperature is still cool which cools muscles, making swimming more difficult.
4. Watch out for submerged hidden hazards and unexpected depths - get in feet first.
5. Supervise children closely and never use inflatable toys in open water – gentle breezes and hidden currents can take them into danger.
6. When walking the shoreline be aware that incoming tides can lead to stranding.
7. Wear a lifejacket when boating or angling and make sure that it is fitted with a crotch strap

If you see someone in difficulty, these simple steps may save a life:

1. Shout to the casualty and encourage them to shore. This may orientate them just enough.
2. Reach out with a long object such a branch or a piece of clothing but do not enter the water yourself.
3. Throw a ringbuoy or any floating object and call 112 for the coast guard.

Of the 105 drownings last year, 62, were accidental. Drownings by suicide were 37 and 6 were of undetermined cause. 80 were male, 25 were female. 62 were aged between 30 and 59. More at www.watersafety.ie

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