



MAY BANK HOLIDAY PRESS RELEASE - WATER SAFETY IRELAND

27 April 2021

## Bank Holiday Brings Increased Risk Of Drowning Public Asked To Stay Alert

Water Safety Ireland is urging the public to stay alert around water this May Bank Holiday weekend when adhering to social distancing, travel, and other public health guidelines. Many more people are likely to visit coastal and inland waterways where the potential for accidents will be even greater.

Cooler more changeable conditions will increase the risks for novice open water swimmers who should keep the duration of their dip to a minimum, wear a wetsuit and swim within their depth. More swimming advice here: [www.watersafety.ie/open-water-swimming/](http://www.watersafety.ie/open-water-swimming/)

Anglers should always wear a lifejacket when on or near water and ensure that it is properly maintained and has a correctly fitted crotch strap. More angling advice here: <https://watersafety.ie/angling/>

Waterways are still cold and novice anglers may not be aware of the following dangers.

### **The dangers of accidental cold water immersion:**

When cold water makes contact with your skin, the cold shock response causes an immediate loss of breathing control, possible dizziness and panic. This dramatically increases the risk of sudden drowning even if the water is calm and you know how to swim. For those who survive this but are unable to get out of the water, progressive body cooling leads to hypothermia and muscle cooling, making swimming more difficult or impossible.

### **What to do if you fall into cold water:**

Float or tread water and if possible get as much of your body out of the water because you will always cool faster in water than in air. Wearing a lifejacket with a crotch strap will enable you to lessen heat escape by keeping your legs together and elbows by your side.

An awareness campaign partnership\* between Water Safety Ireland (WSI), the RNLI and Irish Sailing is calling for greater awareness to avoid a repeat of last year's spike in call outs for rescue services. The three organisations are calling on boaters to ensure that they have the necessary training to enjoy their activity and to take skills refresher classes, for coastal walkers to check tide times to avoid being cut off by a rising tide and for swimmers to be aware that fatigue can set in quickly in cold water (Cold water swimming (<https://youtu.be/zq-VI93ua-A>)).

In an emergency call 112 and ask for the Coast Guard. Always call early.

**Media Enquiries to:**

Water Safety Ireland, The Long Walk, Galway

[www.watersafety.ie](http://www.watersafety.ie); Tel: 091-564400

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**Editor's Note:**

\*Awareness campaign partnership between WSI, the RNLI and Irish Sailing includes videos and photographs produced by David Branigan ([davidbranigan@mailbox.org](mailto:davidbranigan@mailbox.org) / @davidbranigan) with the support of the European Journalism Centre Covid-19 Emergency fund (@ejcnet)

**Repro-free photographs:**

- Freshwater swimming / Coastal swimming / Sailing & Boating / Stand-up paddle-boarding / Safety equipment

**50-second videos:**

1. Sailing & Boating training, Safety prep for Sailing & Boating, **(Irish Sailing)**
2. Freshwater swimming **(Water Safety Ireland)**
3. Beach-walkers, open water swimming and stand-up paddleboards **(RNLI)**