

Safety officers gear up for Amber Thursday ahead of bank holiday weekend

Fire, road and water safety officers across Ireland are joining forces to promote 'Amber Thursday' ahead of the August Bank Holiday weekend, which is traditionally one of the busiest weekends of the year.

As thousands of people flock to beaches, rivers and pools, many more take to the roads while some go camping or fire up the barbeque either in the garden or away from the home. All these activities bring with them, an important element of safety and awareness.

Thursday 29th July, marks the first 'Amber Thursday' event which is a joint collaboration between safety bodies, fire services and local authorities to help promote fire, road and water safety over the holiday weekend to ensure people are aware of risks and dangers associated with these activities.

The recent dry spell and warm weather has resulted in an increase in outdoor fires while there have also been some tragedies in the waters and on the roads.

Last August, Lifeguards rescued 206 people at risk of drowning, administered first aid 1,780 times and reunited 140 lost children with their loved ones. Martin O'Sullivan, Chairman of Water Safety Ireland said "We should all be particularly mindful of water safety during Bank Holiday weekends. Good weather and picture-postcard scenes can lull people into a false sense of security so it is important that people make every effort to swim at Lifeguarded waterways. Let them be there for you by going to any of the waterways listed at www.watersafety.ie/lifeguards where people should swim between the flags, within their depth, and never use inflatable toys that quickly put users in danger of drowning."

Long journeys can be a challenge for some motorists which can lead to driver fatigue. Speeding and non-wearing of a seatbelt are also common factors which result in serious or fatal injuries by road users. Kildare County Council's Road Safety Officer Declan Keogh is Secretary of the Local Authority Road Safety Officers group LARSO. He said "Anyone taking to the roads over the bank holiday weekend should be mindful of the many risks associated with travelling on the road. Everyone needs to share the road and be cautious and

courteous towards one another. It's imperative that drivers are sober of alcohol or illegal drugs while driving and that all passengers are wearing a seatbelt or the appropriate seat restraint. We'd advise drivers to ensure their vehicle is roadworthy and they have everything the need for the trip and to take regular breaks from driving during long journeys."

This bank holiday weekend is a particularly busy time for firefighters who are called to various incidents including wildfires, forest fires, outdoor fires, barbeque or domestic fires and road traffic collisions. The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is encouraging the public to become aware of the risks from fires occurring outdoors, in the home or in the garden. Offaly's Chief Fire Officer Eoin O'Ceilleachair is Secretary of the CFOA. He said "People can become distracted quite easily during outdoor activities such as barbeques in the garden or a camping trip away for instance, and what many people don't realise is how quickly a fire can spread or a how quick a small incident can escalate into a larger one if not managed safely. We're encouraging members of the public to enjoy the weekend but to bear in mind the safety aspect of fire related activities. Keep children away from fires and have a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies. Never barbeque or light a camp-fire in parks, wildland areas or in areas close to vegetation or trees and be mindful not to discard any cigarette butts on the ground."

Amber Thursday is supported by Local Authorities, the Chief Fire Officers Association, Road Safety Authority, Water Safety Ireland and Local Authority Road Safety Officers.

Further information can be found at amberthursday.ie

ENDS

Issued on: 23/07/2021 by Declan Keogh

Mobile: 087-7658838

E-mail: dkeogh@kildarecoco.ie