



## May Bank Holiday Water Safety Appeal from Coast Guard, RNLI and Water Safety Ireland

In the lead up to the May bank holiday weekend, the Coast Guard, RNLI and Water Safety Ireland have issued a joint water safety appeal, asking people to take some basic steps to stay safe, as incidents continue to occur as the weather improves and more people visit waterways nationwide or participate in coastal and inland aquatic activities.

There has been a seasonable increase in the overall number of search and rescue incidents with activity levels similar to recent years. The three organisations are drawing particular attention to the need for people involved in sea kayaking and similar activities, to receive proper training before going on the water, to carry a reliable means of calling for help and to tell someone where you are going and what time you will be back. Water temperatures remain cold even at this time of year and Cold Water Shock can affect everyone. The three organisations advise everyone intending to take part in any water-based activity or coastal walks to take some basic steps in advance to keep safe.

### If heading out on the water or visiting the coast:

- Always check the weather and tides
- Carry a reliable means of raising the alarm (i.e. VHF radio or phone)
- Tell someone where you are going and what time you will be back
- Wear a suitable Personal Flotation Device on the water
- Watch out for incoming tides to avoid getting cut off. With High Tides ranging from midday to early evening depending on the part of the coast, it is important that people check before walking along the coast.

### If you are swimming:

- Water temperatures are still cold at this time of the year, consider wearing a wetsuit to stay warm
- Acclimatise slowly
- Wear a bright swimming cap and consider a tow float to increase your visibility
- Never swim alone and always ensure that your activity is being monitored by a colleague

Micheál O'Toole, Irish Coast Guard Operations Manager, said: It is important to have a means of communication if engaging in any water based activity. When boating, carry a VHF radio, backed up by flares PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) or EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon). Never solely rely on a mobile phone. Prior to undertaking any boat activity please ensure that equipment is fit for purpose and that a shore-based contact is aware of your plans and estimated duration."

Kevin Rahill, RNLI Water Safety Lead, added: 'Many people will be taking to the water for the first time this year and this is a good time to think about checking your equipment, especially your lifejacket. We recommend that people get their lifejackets serviced annually. Not everyone intends to end up in the water. If you fall in unexpectedly, remember to 'Float to Live' – lie on your back and spread your arms and legs, gently moving them to keep afloat. Keep floating until you feel your breath coming back before calling for help or swimming ashore if nearby. For visitors and people new to our shores, the RNLI has a range of translated safety resources in many languages which are available to download here: <https://rnli.org/safety/multi-lingual-resources>

Roger Sweeney, Water Safety Ireland's Acting CEO, cautions: 'Muscle cooling due to hypothermia is a factor in many drownings. Swim within your depth and keep it short as warm air does not mean warm water, especially in May. Children require close, constant, uninterrupted supervision. When shoreline walking, beware of being stranded by incoming tides. Many recently arrived Ukrainians have never visited a beach and are unfamiliar with such stranding risks. Please help to keep them safe by reaching out in your community with the translated advice at [www.watersafety.ie/ukraine](http://www.watersafety.ie/ukraine)

**If you see somebody in trouble on the water or along the coast, or think they are in trouble; Dial 112 or use VHF radio CH 16 and ask for the Coast Guard. Be Summer Ready at [www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/9e76d-be-summer-ready](http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/9e76d-be-summer-ready)**

**Ends**

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