**Water Safety Ireland**

**Press Release**

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**New Moon prompts calls for caution at Christmas coastal swims**

Water Safety Ireland is urging those planning festive charity dips to be mindful of the effect of a new moon on Dec 23rd which will lead to higher tides throughout the weekend. Higher tides can hide unfamiliar depths and hazards that can result in injuries and entanglement. Staying within your depth and close to shore will help avoid rip currents that can take a swimmer away in cold water, where the onset of hypothermia can make it difficult to self-rescue.

Charity swims have grown in popularity, yet some swimmers occasionally take chances beyond their ability, finding themselves left without sufficient strength to climb out of the water due to the cold.

Sudden immersion in cold water can induce “Cold Shock” which can cause dramatic changes in breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. The sudden gasp and rapid breathing creates a greater risk of drowning even for confident swimmers in calm waters. To help prevent Cold Shock, festive dippers should first become accustomed to the colder temperatures by splashing themselves with water while getting in slowly. To avoid the risk of hypothermia, people should get out without delay and warm up quickly.

If you see somebody in trouble in cold water: SHOUT – REACH – THROW....

SHOUT to calm, encourage and orientate them;

REACH with anything that prevents you from entering the water;

THROW a ringbuoy or any floating object to them and call 999 or 112 for the Coast Guard.

Thousands of people will be taking family strolls by rivers, lakes and shorelines. A new moon on Friday makes the coastline more precarious due to the resulting tides. Children should be told to stay away from edges. The lower low tides of a new moon often tempt coastal walkers to explore further from shore, posing a greater risk of being stranded by fast, incoming tides. Carry a fully charged phone to dial 112 or 999 in an emergency.

**Media Enquiries to:**

Joanne Walsh – 087 1990339 – [joannewalsh@watersafety.ie](mailto:joannewalsh@watersafety.ie)

Roger Sweeney – 087 6789601 – [rogersweeney@watersafety.ie](mailto:rogersweeney@watersafety.ie)

Padraig Judge – 087 74590156 - [padraigjudge@watersafety.ie](mailto:padraigjudge@watersafety.ie)

Ciara Gleeson – 087 331 9164 – [ciaragleeson@watersafety.ie](mailto:ciaragleeson@watersafety.ie)