



Press release

Icy conditions prompts inter-agency water safety warning

Irish Coast Guard, RNLI and Water Safety Ireland issue cold weather warnings for water activities

13 December 2022

With the current icy weather warnings in place throughout the country, the Coast Guard, RNLI and Water Safety Ireland have issued a joint water safety appeal urging people to be aware of the added danger at our aquatic environments and of additional safety considerations when on or near the water.

Due to the freezing temperatures, many inland bodies of water have frozen over at canals, lakes, ponds and flooded areas. As the thickness of this ice can vary greatly the strong advice is to stay off the ice. Be extra vigilant while walking beside bodies of water as walkways and paths can become extremely slippery and unsafe when icy. Keep pets and young children away from the edges.

Many people are expected to take part in festive dips. The three maritime organisations are asking people to check that they have the right information to safely enjoy these activities and that they know what to do in the event of an emergency. Cold water swims are very popular in the run up to Christmas and New Year. However, the current cold snap means that there are added risks to consider when taking part in these types of activities. This is particularly so inland. Avoid lakes that are covered or partially covered in ice.

- In an emergency dial 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard
- Have a means of calling for help, e.g., a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch and a whistle
- Check weather and tides. Be particularly mindful of strong wind conditions.
- When you go open water swimming, it is very important to acclimatise by entering the water slowly and allowing time for your body to get used to the cold.
- To help yourself acclimatise, splash the cold water on your neck and face.
- Warm up afterwards by putting on dry clothes quickly and wear a warm hat as soon as you get out.
- Entry and exit points may be difficult in the sub-zero conditions so walk slowly to avoid slipping.
- Avoid swimming in areas where there is ice.

Water Safety Ireland's Deputy CEO, Roger Sweeney added 'Children are naturally curious about walking on ice but parents should emphasize that it is not safe as the thickness can vary. This is why it so important that adults provide uninterrupted, responsible supervision beside any waterway.'

RNLI Water Safety Delivery Support Lisa Hollingum added: 'Cold water shock is a very real possibility while winter swimming and dipping. Acclimatise before getting in, don't stay in long and warm up as soon as you get out of the water. Look out for one another.'

Irish Coast Guard Head of Operations Gerard O'Flynn said, "Many people are looking forward to engaging in outdoor activities, including open water swimming or quick dips over the over the festive period, but please attend to your personal safety by carefully planning your intended activity."

Ends

Media Enquiries to:

Water Safety Ireland, The Long Walk, Galway. info@watersafety.ie / www.watersafety.ie; Tel: 091-564400

Roger Sweeney 087-678.9601 / rogersweeney@watersafety.ie

Padraig Judge 087-459.0156 / padraigjudge@watersafety.ie

Ciara Gleeson 087 – 331.9164 / ciaragleeson@watersafety.ie