



**St. Patrick's Day Water Safety Appeal
from the Coast Guard, RNLI & Water Safety Ireland**

Ahead of St. Patrick's Day festivities the Coast Guard, RNLI and Water Safety Ireland have issued a joint water safety appeal, asking people to stay safe when in, near or on the water. The organisations are also urging the public to stay away from waterways if consuming alcohol. There are an average of 9 drownings in Ireland every month and alcohol is a contributory factor in one third.

A lifejacket that has a correctly fitting crotch strap, should always be worn on water and when angling from shore. If engaging in any boating activity it is essential to have a means of communication such as VHF radio, personal locator beacon or mobile phone as a backup.

Water temperatures are still cold, meaning cold water shock and hypothermia are risks that can affect everyone. To avoid this during swims, people should acclimatise to the water slowly to get used to the cold and warm up quickly upon exiting the water. The Coast Guard, RNLI and Water Safety Ireland advise everyone intending to take part in any water-based activity or coastal walks to make sure they check in advance what they should do to keep safe.

If heading out on the water or visiting the coast:

- Never mix alcohol with water activities
- Always check the weather and tides
- Carry a reliable means of raising the alarm (VHF radio, PLB or fully charged mobile phone)
- Tell someone where you are going and what time you will be back
- Wear a suitable Personal Flotation Device when boating or angling
- Watch out for incoming tides to avoid getting cut off

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

Coast Guard operations Manager Micheal O'Toole said; "St Patrick's weekend is a traditional start to the holiday season and with extended daylight people will be keen to get out and about. Always carry a means of communication. If engaging in coastal walks only use routes with which you are familiar or routes that are well marked and in regular use. Be attentive to erosion or changes that may have occurred over the winter period"

RNLI Head of Region Anna Classon added; "As the evenings get longer, the water temperature is at its coldest at this time of year. Cold water shock is still a risk and we ask people to take care when entering and exiting the water. Acclimatise slowly and never swim alone."

Water Safety Ireland's Deputy CEO, Roger Sweeney, cautions that people should stay away from water if consuming alcohol: "At this time of year many people will enjoy family trips to waterways nationwide. However, it is important people remember to supervise children closely and not to drink alcohol when supervising children near water. Alcohol is a contributory factor in over 30% of drowning incidents and an individual's judgement and reaction times can be significantly impaired."

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.

Ends

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