



Easter weekend prompts joint water safety appeal from the Coast Guard, RNLI & Water Safety Ireland

This Easter bank holiday weekend, the Coast Guard, RNLI and Water Safety Ireland have issued a joint water safety appeal asking people to take some basic precautions to stay safe when they visit the coast or participate in water activities, coastal or inland.

With the evenings getting brighter and the weather improving, more people are expected to get out on the water and knowing some simple water safety advice could help prevent an accident or tragedy. There will also be spring tides this weekend, which means higher than normal water levels at full tide. This can increase the risk of getting cut off by tide so people are asked to be mindful before planning a trip.

The three organisations are issuing some important safety advice to people who will be engaging in a range of water-based activities:

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. phone or VHF radio)
- 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

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

If you are kayaking, canoeing or paddle boarding:

- Always have a means for calling for help and make sure you can access it when you are out on the water
- Tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to return
- Wear a lifejacket or buoyancy aid
- Always check the weather forecast and sea conditions before you set off.
- Paddle in a group where possible. If you're exploring somewhere new, seek knowledge from experienced practitioners in the area.

Irish Coast Guard Operations Manager Micheál O'Toole said: 'Many people will take the opportunity of the Easter long weekend to visit the coast and take part in coastal or water-based activity. Having some basic water safety knowledge in advance could make an enormous difference and even save a life. People need to be mindful that the water is very cold at this time of year, and it is easy to be caught out by tides. Never ever swim alone and if you are using a boat or kayak, let someone know you are out and when expected back. Please ensure that if an emergency arises and you need assistance, that you are capable of contacting the Coast Guard with a marine VHF radio, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or EPIRB. Never rely on a mobile phone alone.'

Lisa Hollingum, RNLI Water Safety Delivery Support added: 'By taking a few simple steps, everyone can reduce the risk of an accident in or near 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.'

Water Safety Ireland's Deputy CEO Roger Sweeney said: 'School children are particularly at risk on Easter holiday family trips to waterways nationwide. They are naturally curious about water and require close, uninterrupted adult supervision. Have a water safety conversation with the children in your care. Teach them the advice available at www.teachpaws.ie and be summer ready at www.gov.ie/summerready.'

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