



PRESS RELEASE

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Water Safety Ireland, Irish Coast Guard and RNLI issue advice for water-based activities during the festive season

The Coast Guard, Water Safety Ireland and the RNLI have issued a joint appeal for the festive season, urging people to be mindful of the potential risks with their chosen activity and attend to their personal safety in planning and participating in any water based or coastal activities.

The increase in popularity of festive dips and open water swimming will see a lot of people taking to the water over the next few weeks. Many people will also avail of the opportunity to participate in coastal walks and hikes. 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.

For those taking part in winter dips and swims the advice is:

- **Never swim alone.**
- **Ensure that somebody ashore is monitoring your activity.**
- **Acclimatise slowly.**
- **Stay within your depth.**
- **Always be seen.**
- **Organisers of Christmas day or New year swims are advised to have suitably trained personnel in attendance and to appoint a Safety Officer.**

Water-based activities at this or any time of year are not limited to swimming as the popularity of kayaking, canoeing, boating, and paddle-boarding remains high. The safety advice for these activities includes:

- **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.**
- **If you're exploring somewhere new, seek knowledge from experienced practitioners in the area.**

Water Safety Ireland's Deputy CEO Roger Sweeney said "A full moon during Christmas week (Dec 27th) will heighten the risks for walkers and swimmers as the resulting higher high tides will make our coastline more precarious. Stay away from the water's edge on family walks and swimmers should watch out for stronger rip currents. Stranding will also be a risk for many walkers as the lower low tides caused by the full moon will expose even greater areas of the coastline. Children are often tempted to explore these sandbanks but risk being surrounded by an incoming tide. Parents and guardians should provide constant undistracted adult supervision of their children at all times."

RNLI Water Safety Lead Linda Gene Byrne added “This time of year sees a huge increase in people doing seasonal swims and dips, particularly for charity. We would urge people when they decide to take to the water, to make time to ensure they are doing it safely and with the correct knowledge and equipment. That time taken could save a life or another person’s life. If you need to call for help, everything that you have done to keep afloat could make all the difference.”

Coast Guard Operations manager Gerard O’Flynn commented “Please plan your activity, whether it be on the water or along the coast and only swim or walk in areas with which you are familiar. Be mindful that less busy walkways may have suffered erosion since the summertime. Always carry a means of communication, such as VHF radio or a personal locator beacon especially if going afloat. PLBs attached to a lifejacket are proven to be lifesavers”.

The Coast Guard, Water Safety Ireland and RNLI would also like to thank all the volunteers and staff of the search and rescue organisations, who keep people safe on the water all year round and whose actions have saved many lives and wish them and their families a SAFE, happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

If you see somebody in trouble on the water or along the coast, or think they are in trouble, dial 112 or 999 and ask for the Coast Guard.

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