



May Bank Holiday Water Safety Appeal from Water Safety Ireland, Coast Guard and RNLI

Ahead of the May bank holiday weekend, Water Safety Ireland, the Coast Guard and the RNLI are jointly appealing to people to be safe and summer ready when planning an activity on or near the water.

The organisations are urging people to ensure that boats and other watercraft, including kayaks and canoes, are checked and in good working order following the winter period. Engines should be serviced and all equipment, particularly lifejackets, should be in good condition.

If out on a boat, or other water vessel:

- Wear a lifejacket, carry a reliable means of communication – a VHF radio and ideally a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) with mobile phone back up in a watertight case
- Ensure that you tell someone where you are going and when you plan to be back

If planning activities on the water:

- Always bring a means of effectively communicating a distress
- Use readily available sources of information to check the environmental conditions (weather and tides) in advance of your trip
- Seek help immediately if you see somebody in trouble on the water or along the coast, or think they are in trouble, by using Marine VHF channel 16 or Dialling 112 and asking for the Coast Guard

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

Kevin Whitney, Operations Manager at the Coast Guard reminded everyone to 'Plan & Prepare' before considering any water-based or coastal activity ahead of and during the summer months: 'Do not use inflatable toys in open water or swim out after anything drifting as things can quickly go badly wrong. Be aware of potential dangers and well prepared before engaging in any water-based activities. The Be Summer Ready website at www.gov.ie/summerready provides good water safety advice and we urge the public to read this before venturing out on the water.'

Roger Sweeney, Deputy CEO at Water Safety Ireland said: 'An average of five people drown in Ireland every fortnight and cold water is often a factor. Sudden immersion can cause a shock to your body, a loss of breathing control, dizziness, and panic. Hypothermia and muscle cooling soon makes swimming difficult or impossible, particularly for children who have less body fat. Keep cold water swims short and enter the water slowly, staying within your depth. Shore anglers should always wear a lifejacket and walkers should carry a mobile phone and keep a close eye on incoming tides to avoid being stranded.'

Linda-Gene Byrne, RNLI Water Safety Lead said: 'Many people will be taking vessels to the water for the first time this year so this is a good time to think about checking your equipment, especially your lifejacket so that it is fit for purpose.'

'Others may be planning a trip to the beach and a swim in the sea. We would encourage swimmers to be mindful of rip currents which can be difficult to spot, but are sometimes identified by a channel of churning, choppy water on the sea's surface. Even the most experienced beachgoers can be caught out by rips so remember don't try to swim against it or you'll get exhausted. If you can stand, wade don't swim. If you can, swim parallel to the shore until free of the rip and then head for shore. Always raise your hand and shout for help.'

If you see somebody in trouble on the water or along the coast, or think they are in trouble, use Marine VHF channel 16 or Dial 112 and ask for the Coast Guard.

Ends

Media Enquiries to:

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

Joanne Walsh 087-199.0339 / joannewalsh@watersafety.ie
Roger Sweeney 087-678.9601 / rogersweeney@watersafety.ie
Padraig Judge 087-459.0156 / padraigjudge@watersafety.ie