

**PRESS RELEASE
IRISH WATER SAFETY**

14th April 2014

**Prevent tragic Easter accidents -
“Drown-proof your child with key holiday advice”**

Half a million primary school children have started their Easter Holidays yet 90% of them may not know how to stay safe when playing near or on water. Having issued 40,000 certificates to primary schools last year, Irish Water Safety is calling for responsible and constant child supervision in aquatic environments and a greater uptake by schoolteachers of its primary school water safety programme, an official component of the curriculum.

Every year, Irish Water Safety issues about 40,000 primary-school water safety certificates, meaning that more than 450,000 children have yet to receive this training even though much of the programme is easily delivered as it is classroom based with free resources. With some months left before summer, there is still time for teachers and parents to teach behaviours that will keep children safe from drowning.

Constant responsible parental supervision guarantees child safety yet tragic drownings occur every year when children manage to escape the watchful eye of guardians. Children are naturally curious about water however therefore parents should check if their local primary school has yet introduced Irish Water Safety's Primary Aquatics Water Safety "PAWS" programme which is a component of the primary school curriculum that teaches children how to stay safe around water.

Forty children aged fourteen and under died in a decade of tragic drownings, sometimes silently and in a matter of seconds and in just a few inches of water, therefore it is essential that kids are constantly supervised when on or near water. A further analysis of drowning data available for the decade to 2012 revealed a number of particular hazards applicable to Easter holiday activities.

62% of drownings occur inland. Walkers should therefore stay well away from the edge of ordinarily familiar waterside pathways due to the risk of riverbanks crumbling away.

38% occurred in coastal regions, Anglers should therefore be extremely vigilant when fishing from the shoreline of Atlantic swells and beach walkers should be aware of the risk of being stranded. It is important to carry a fully charged mobile phone and be in the company of others. Remember your lifeline in an emergency is 999 and 112.

A third of drowning victims had consumed alcohol therefore it is best left until after your activity to celebrate.

Those boating should ensure that their family and friends wear a lifejacket at all times. When children are brought boating, it is essential that they wear a lifejacket and that the lifejacket has a crotch strap to avoid the possibility of the child slipping out through it. More online advice, geared towards children, is available at www.aquaattack.ie.

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