

Irish Water Safety St Patrick's Festival appeal: "40 kids drowned in ten years - Keep children away from the edge"

Half a million primary school children will start their St Patrick's Festival break on Friday yet many will lack an awareness of how to stay safe when playing near water.

Many will be unaware that a full moon this Sunday 16th March will mean that the gravitational pull of the moon and sun will be combined and at these times, higher "spring" tides are very high and low tides are very low, presenting a much higher risk that people will be trapped by incoming tides when enjoying warmer weather bank holiday walks.

Constant responsible supervision guarantees child safety yet tragic drownings occur every year when children manage to escape the watchful eye of guardians. Forty children aged fourteen and under drowned in ten years, sometimes silently and in a matter of seconds and in just a few inches of water, therefore it is essential that they are constantly supervised when on or near water. When boating, it is essential that children and adults wear a lifejacket that has a correctly fitting crotch strap to avoid the possibility of slipping out through it.

We average 140 drownings in Ireland every year*, 62% inland and 38% in coastal regions therefore walkers should remain alert and stay well away from the edges of waterside pathways as many have been severely damaged by recent flooding. Remember that your lifeline in an emergency is 999 and 112.

Alcohol consumption is a factor in one third of all drownings, therefore those intending to enjoy aquatic activities should remain alcohol-free until they are well away from water.

Sea temperatures are still cold at less than 10 degrees which puts people at risk of cold shock and hypothermia due to sudden immersion or prolonged periods in water, which should be avoided.

Irish Water Safety is appealing to parents to give vital water safety information to their children and that teachers do so when schools return and help prevent further tragic drownings this coming summer.

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