

FIVE PER FORTNIGHT DROWN IN IRELAND RISKS INCREASE DURING BANK HOLIDAYS SO KNOW THE DANGERS

There are 133 drownings in Ireland every year –more than five every fortnight. Over the May Bank Holiday, people will be at risk of cold shock, hypothermia and drowning when visiting coastlines and inland waterways. Irish Water Safety urges everyone, including waterside walkers, to be mindful of these dangers and not become complacent in dangerous situations.

People have a responsibility to themselves and family to stay safe around water by knowing the dangers and learning from previous situations such as the following that have led to tragic drownings:

- Always wear a lifejacket when boating and ensure that it properly maintained and has a correctly fitted crotch strap. It is rare that somebody drowns when wearing one and if they do drown it is normally because of a malfunction or from being fitted incorrectly.
- Shore walkers should stay away from the edge and beach walkers should remain vigilant to the dangers of being stranded by incoming tides.
- Ensure that you are fully trained and competent for your aquatic activity. Find training providers at www.safetyzone.ie.
- Child safety requires constant uninterrupted supervision to avoid tragedy. Parents of primary school children should check if their local school has yet introduced Irish Water Safety's classroom programme – Primary Aquatics Water Safety, which teaches children all about staying safe from drowning. The program is a non-mandatory part of the primary school curriculum and is key to reducing child drowning mortalities and injuries.
- Anglers should be extremely vigilant of Atlantic swells and wear a lifejacket when fishing from the shoreline.
- Swimmers should swim parallel and close to the shore and be aware that seawater temperature, currently as low as 9°C, is still too cold for extended swims.
- Alcohol should be avoided before or during any aquatic activity. On average, a third of drowning victims had consumed alcohol.
- In a developing emergency situation, call 112 and ask for the Coast Guard. Always call early.

Irish Water Safety encourages everyone to take swimming and water survival classes - for further information click on www.iws.ie. Report missing or vandalised ringbuoys on www.ringbuoys.ie.

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