

Water Safety in Winter



Irish Water Safety is concerned that many people planning to take part in Christmas/winter swims may take chances beyond what is acceptably safe. They are asking the public to keep the length of time they remain in the water to a minimum so as to reduce the risk of hypothermia.

"Cold shock" and hypothermia can overwhelm the fittest of swimmers but steps can be taken to remain accident free:

- * Swimmers should "Get In, Get Out and Warm Up", avoiding extended periods of exposure.

- * Christmas Swim organisers should ensure that they provide comprehensive details of each

event to the Irish Coast Guard and local Gardai.

- * Check with the Safety Officer, who will advise and has the ultimate responsibility for making decisions.
- * If the seas are rough and weather deteriorates, wait for a more suitable day to honour your charity commitment.
- * Cold water cools muscles faster than during warmer summer swims and may cause cramp.
- * Alcohol should be avoided before and immediately after swimming as it impairs judgment.

Ensure that you have safe access to the water and a safe place to leave the water—with appropriate shallow shelving, steps or ladders. Less agile people should be mindful that steps leading into the water might be dangerous due to the possible growth of algae. Organisers should ensure that slipways or steps have been cleaned of slime, weed and algae.

A New Year's Resolution

Safeguarding your loved ones extends beyond Christmas swims to family walks by rivers, lakes and shorelines. Spring tides will increase the risk of stranding on our coastline. Parents can be lulled into a false sense of security when visiting relatives living close to water hazards such as slurry pits, exposed drains and canals. Safeguard your children with constant uninterrupted supervision and make a New Year's resolution to learn swimming and lifesaving skills and to always wear a lifejacket on water.



Water Safety Advice in Case of Flooding



- Listen to the national and local radio for Met Éireann Updates.
- Check on neighbours particularly if they are elderly, infirm or families with young children.
- Move your vehicles to higher ground.
- Check your small craft to ensure it is well secured or moored.
- Make sure you have warm clothes, food, drink, a torch and radio.
- Block doorways and air bricks with sandbags or plastic bags filled with earth. Flood gate products will also work effectively.
- Switch off gas and electricity supplies if flooding is imminent.
- Check the time of high water in the newspaper or online.
- Never try to swim through fast flowing water.
- Carry a mobile phone at all times—call 112 in emergency.
- Wear suitable protective clothing & a lifejacket in, on or around water.
- Never put your feet down if swept away because your feet or body could become entrapped.
- Flooding on roads will be deeper at dips and around bridges.
- Manhole covers may have been moved due to the heavy flow of water.
- The dangers are multiplied during the hours of darkness.

Contact: Irish Water Safety, The Long Walk, Galway. Tel: 091 564400. For more tips on water safety visit: www.iws.ie

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