

To enjoy water safely, follow the water safety code published by RoSPA:

Spot the dangers

Check the weather forecast for the day and go equipped for the conditions. Check out the area when you arrive. Check out where the lifebuoys are and where to run for help. Check out where the points of help are, look for safety information and advice.

Take safety advice

Notices will warn of dangers particular to the area that you are visiting. There may be a safety information notice at your point of arrival. Know what the signs mean and do what they tell you.

Go together

Children should always go with an adult, not by themselves. Before allowing children to explore or play in the area, point out the dangers and establish where they are allowed to go and where they are not. If you are planning a trip alone, for example a boating or fishing trip, ensure that someone knows your plans including your intended whereabouts and expected time of return.

We're not superhuman

The Fire Service will do all it can to save a life but there are some situations that are not safe, even for us. Recognise the dangers: avoid doing anything that may place your life at risk, and in the event emergency services are called out, put their lives at risk.

If you are witnessing a rescue, keep well back and let the professionals deal with the situation, it's the safest option.

Further information can be found at:
www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk
www.rospa.com/leisuresafety/water/

The information contained in this document can also be provided in other formats including braille, audiotape and large print.
Please call 0845 8009000.

Water Safety



On average throughout the UK there are approximately 250 inland waterway drowning incidents each year.* Recently in one day, in 2007, two youths died in separate incidents in the West Midlands from entering cold water on a warm day.

Even the strongest of swimmers can be incapacitated by entering cold water. Many people are confident enough to enter water, they enter of their own free will, feeling confident they don't understand how incapacitating and dangerous cold water can be.

A small percentage of fatalities (6%) can be attributed to the ignorance of, or complacency of the risks. This mainly occurs in men aged between 18-30; it is often connected with alcohol and frequently relates to events, such as 'stag' parties.



Cold Water Shock

Inland water can be surprisingly cold, as little as 2°C in summer. On hot days people looking for a little fun may be encouraged to jump into the cold water. This difference in temperature can result in a phenomenon known as "cold water shock". Not a great deal is known about this effect but research has suggested that when a warm body is quickly immersed in cold water, it reacts with sudden constriction of the capillaries under the fat just under your skin.

This is an involuntary reaction that cannot be prevented. The result is a sudden increase in blood pressure; the heart rate rises dramatically putting extra stress on the heart. This cannot be consciously controlled, and can result in immediate loss of consciousness followed by drowning.

If you see someone is in difficulty, in water, then first shout for help. RoSPA advise the following:

"Rescuing a drowning person is the last resort and you should do everything possible to avoid getting into a dangerous situation in the first place. If you have to make a rescue attempt, think of your own safety first and never put yourself in danger. If the rescue is too dangerous, wait until the emergency services arrive."

* Statistics: ROSPA, 2003