

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Increased danger of drowning in warmer weather

- 18 accidental water related deaths in Wales in 2024
- Most accidental drownings happen during warmer months
- Respect The Water campaign has important life saving advice
- Media spokespeople available for interview

New data from 2024 shows that most accidental water related fatalities in Wales occur during the warmer months, with half taking place in May, June and July. May 2024, the hottest on record<sup>i</sup>, saw a notable increase in accidental water fatalities compared to 2023.

Despite a warm spring, open water temperatures can remain dangerously cold – many coastal and inland waters remain below 16°C all year round, which can trigger cold water shock. Cold water shock is the body's response to sudden immersion in cold water, leading to an involuntary gasp, rapid breathing and temporary loss of swimming ability. This can result in drowning, especially if the person falls into the water unexpectedly.

As the weather heats up across Wales, more people will be spending time in and around the water. Water Safety Wales<sup>ii</sup> is reminding everyone to [Respect The Water](#) by being aware of the risks, and by knowing how to help themselves and others in an emergency.

Sadly 18 people accidentally died in water related fatalities in 2024. This is a 25% reduction of fatalities when compared with 2023 however, with a further 19 cases where the cause is still unknown, the number of accidental fatalities is likely to increase as additional information becomes available from coroners. The accidental deaths form part of the 54 total water-related fatalities in Wales for 2024.

The 2024 Water Incident Database (WAID), which is maintained by the National Water Safety Forum (NWSF)<sup>iii</sup>, shows that in Wales:

- May, June, July and November were the months with the most accidental fatalities.
- Males continue to be overrepresented with 82% of accidental fatalities.
- Males aged 20-29, 50 – 59 and 70 – 79 were the highest groups for accidental fatalities.
- Recreational activities, such as adventure sports, angling, boating, and waterside activities, accounted for 67% of all accidental fatalities.
- Accidental fatalities occur at both inland (lakes, rivers, canals, reservoirs and quarries) and coastal waters, with 56% occurring at coastal locations.

- Of the 193 accidental fatalities in the UK, 18 were in Wales, 136 were in England, 33 in Scotland and 6 in Northern Ireland.

Water Safety Wales supports the NWSF's *Respect the Water* public safety campaign that provides simple, life-saving advice to empower people to take responsibility for their safety near water. This includes knowing what to do if you find yourself in trouble in the water, and knowing what to do if you spot someone else in difficulty.<sup>iv</sup>

If you find yourself in trouble in the water, **float to live**:

- Tilt your head back with your ears submerged
- Try to relax and breathe normally while you move your hands to help you stay afloat
- Once the effects of the cold water shock pass, shout for help.

If you see someone else in trouble in the water this summer, remember **Call, Tell, Throw**:

- **Call** 999 to get help
- **Tell** the struggling person to float on their back
- **Throw** them something that floats, such as a life ring, inflatable toy, or bottle.

Water Safety Wales will be promoting the Respect the Water campaign throughout the summer, including a campaign focused on how to float to coincide with World Drowning Prevention Day on 25<sup>th</sup> July.

Chris Cousens, Chair of Water Safety Wales said:

“These latest figures on drowning deaths in Wales are deeply concerning. Each statistic represents a life lost and a family devastated. With the summer months approaching, it's crucial for everyone to prioritise water safety. Whether you're at the beach, a river, or a lake, always be aware of the risks and take necessary precautions.

I strongly encourage everyone to visit the Respect the Water website to learn about water safety. Understanding how to prevent drownings can make a huge difference. Just a few moments spent on this could save many lives.”

To view and download the WAID 2024 report, visit the [NWSF website](#).

For more information about the Respect the Water campaign visit [respectthewater.com](https://respectthewater.com)

**ENDS**

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Joseph Tinkler [jtinkler@rospa.com](mailto:jtinkler@rospa.com)

**Notes to editors:**

Wales water-related fatalities	2024
Accident suspected	17
Not recorded	19
Natural Causes suspected	1
Suicide suspected*	17
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>54</b>




\*In accordance with Samaritans’ [Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide](#) we do not highlight data concerning these kinds of incidents, nor do we identify or comment on specific locations or suicide methods. For further information contact [mediaadvice@samaritans.org](mailto:mediaadvice@samaritans.org) or call 07483 028725. Anyone can contact Samaritans free, at any time from any phone, on 116 123, email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) for more information.

<sup>i</sup> Met Office, May 2024 Monthly Weather Report [mwr\\_2024\\_05\\_for\\_print\\_v1.pdf](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Water Safety Wales, established in 2017, is a collaborative group of organizations dedicated to reducing drowning incidents and promoting water safety across Wales. It aims to provide a unified approach to water safety through education, awareness campaigns, and targeted interventions. The group includes members such as the RNLI, Royal Life Saving Society, NRW, Swim Wales, Canal and River Trust, Fire Rescue Services and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, working together to implement strategies and initiatives that address water-related risks and enhance public safety.

<sup>iii</sup> The National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) is a UK-focused, voluntary network, working together to reduce water-related deaths and associated harm.

<sup>iv</sup> See [this link](#) for further information about who to call in an emergency on or near water.

		
<b>CALL</b> 999 and ask for the right service	<b>TELL</b> them to float on their back	<b>THROW</b> them something that floats