



DROWNING PREVENTION WEEK 2021 – A MESSAGE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

Saturday 19th June 2021 marks the start of Drowning Prevention Week and Ayrshire Police Division is working alongside HM Coastguard and partner emergency services to highlight the dangers of entering the water this summer.

Over 400 people on average each year lose their life to accidental drowning around the UK and Ireland and nearly half of those people who sadly lose their life had no intention of ever entering the water. This number involves a significant number of young people.

With summer now upon us, many people wishing to enjoy spells of good weather at the coast or inland waterways and a surge in water based activities being enjoyed in Ayrshire we are urging everyone make sure they stay safe around water and they #KnowWhoToCall in an emergency.

Inspector Frank Braddick, from Ayr Police Office said: "I urge all parents and carers to have a conversation with the young people they have responsibility for around water safety. Every year Police Scotland receive a number of calls in the local area with regards to young people getting into difficulty. Sadly these calls do not always have a positive outcome. It concerns me greatly the number of young people who seek enjoyment from diving from Harbours - despite the significant danger this presents – as well as other behaviours which can lead to them getting into real difficulty.

"We are blessed in Ayrshire with beautiful areas of coast and inland waterways and whilst many of us gain enjoyment as well as physical and mental health benefits from being in or by the water, we should respect the water and recognise that dangers can be present whatever the activity or ability.

"I encourage everyone to use the What 3 Words application which is invaluable if you are lost and need to seek help – this app helps emergency services to reach you quicker. Please search for what3words and download for free.

"Importantly – alcohol and swimming don't mix. Alcohol interferes with swimming skills, balance and co-ordination and can increase the risk of hypothermia in water. I again encourage you to have an open and honest discussion about this with young people".

Kevin Paterson, Coastguard Station Officer, said: "We want everyone to enjoy the coast and to remember their visit for all the right reasons – not the wrong ones.

"In recent years we have seen a significant increase in the use of inflatable toys at the coast and we have been involved a number of serious incidents whereby young people have been blown out to sea. Inflatable toys are designed for use in the swimming pool so we would urge everyone if they're planning on visiting the coast, to leave the inflatable toys at home.

"Jumping into cold water can also appear to be an attractive way of cooling down on the warmer days, but there's a number of risks involved including not knowing how deep the water

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is, potential for debris and other dangerous items lodged below the surface and hidden currents.

“There's also the significant risk of cold water shock which makes you gasp uncontrollably and breathe in water, rendering you unable to swim which can quickly lead to drowning. Please talk to the young people close to you about what to do if they find themselves suddenly immersed in cold water - three simple words could save a life – FLOAT TO LIVE. Fight your instincts to thrash around – simply lie back, extend your arms and legs and float until the effects of cold water shock pass. Once you have your breath back and have composed yourself, you can then start shouting for help or if possible swim to a place of safety.”

When it comes to emergencies at the coast and involving water, seconds count so it's vital people, including our young people, #KnowWhoToCall in an emergency.

If someone is in difficulty in water inland (canals, reservoirs etc.) dial 999 and ask for Fire & Rescue.

If someone is at risk or in difficulty at sea or along the coast always dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

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Thank you for your support.

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