



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

## Campaign Toolkit

# BE WATER AWARE



**26 April - 2 May 2021**  
**Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Week**

# Campaign Messages

The campaign will provide advice to encourage people to be safe in and around water:

- **Activities in and around water** – including activities such as tombstoning, walking/running and use of inflatables
- **People on a night out** - generally males and younger age groups who may have alcohol and/or drugs in their system. Routes away from water and with friends will be safer.
- **Away from home** - both home and abroad. We see a number of deaths not included in the WAID figures as UK nationals lose their lives abroad. Additionally, we are aware that lack of local knowledge combined with a relaxed holiday outlook can increase the risk of a drowning incident for those visiting areas near water.
- **Advice on who to call** – Public can be unsure of which service to ask for to respond to a water incident.

Be Water Aware aims to encourage people to spend time in and around the water in the safest way possible, we encourage fire and rescue services to engage with organised groups that have knowledge and experience of water safety. Examples could include local open water swimmers, walking groups, surfers.

**Resources and messages in the toolkit can be used throughout the year and are not just for campaign week. Please use them to highlight safety advice if local need arises at any time of the year.**

**Messages are provided for both inland and coastal waters. In your service has no coastal water we ask you still use messages, particularly ahead of peak holiday times so your audiences can use the advice when away from home.**

NFCC's commitment to drowning prevention is underpinned the National Drowning Prevention Strategy and our inclusion as members of the National Water Safety Forum. Since the strategy was released, accidental drownings in the UK have reduced by one third.

The National Fire Chiefs Council are a member of the **National Water Safety Forum (NWSF)** This means our messaging is aligned to that of other members and we work closely with and in support of them. We encourage Fire Services to take this collaborative approach at a local level too. Other members of NWSF include RNLI, RoSPA, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, RLSS UK. Campaign resources for Respect The Water can also be used and will also made available for water safety messaging.

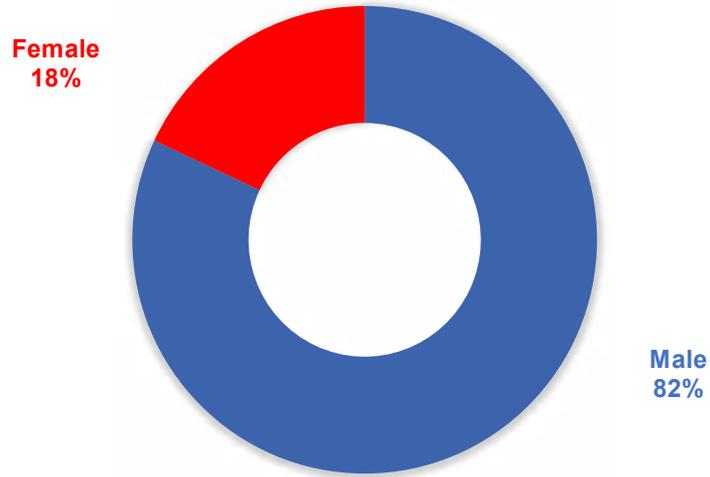
## **Drowning Prevention Strategies**

The Be Water Aware campaign is underpinned by the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy and in addition for colleagues in Wales and Scotland, there are further strategies for both countries. Ensure you take a look at these documents to support your work. The documents can be accessed on the NFCC website - <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Be-Water-Aware>

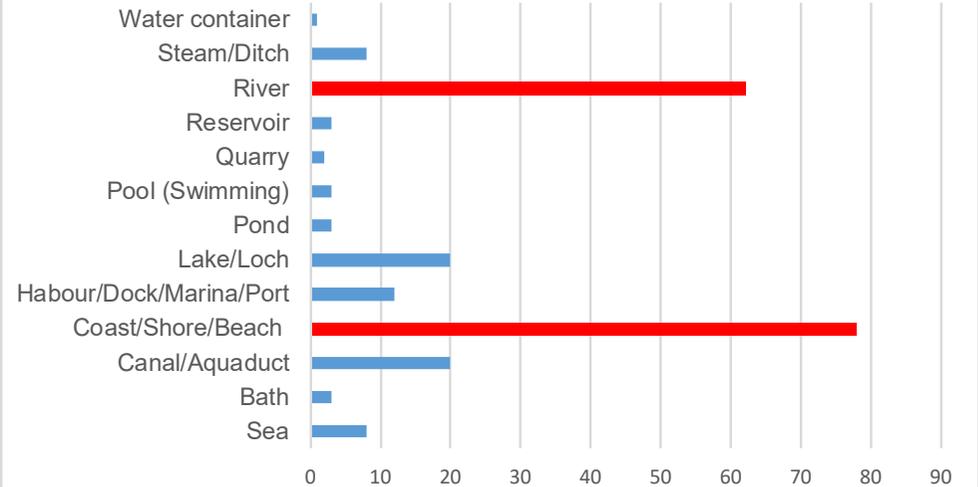
Please use judgement of local and national Covid restrictions to decide if all messages are suitable for issue at time of campaign

# Statistics 2019

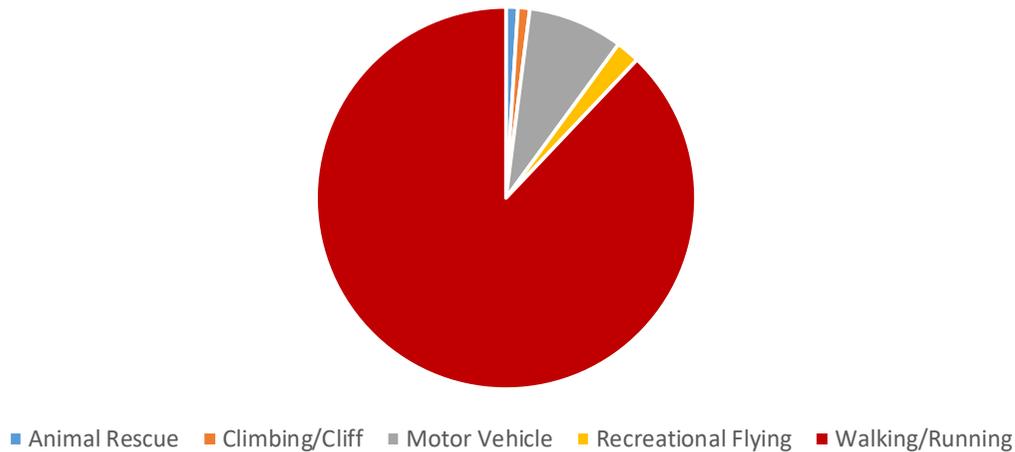
Accidental Drownings by Gender 2019



Accidental Drownings by Body of Water

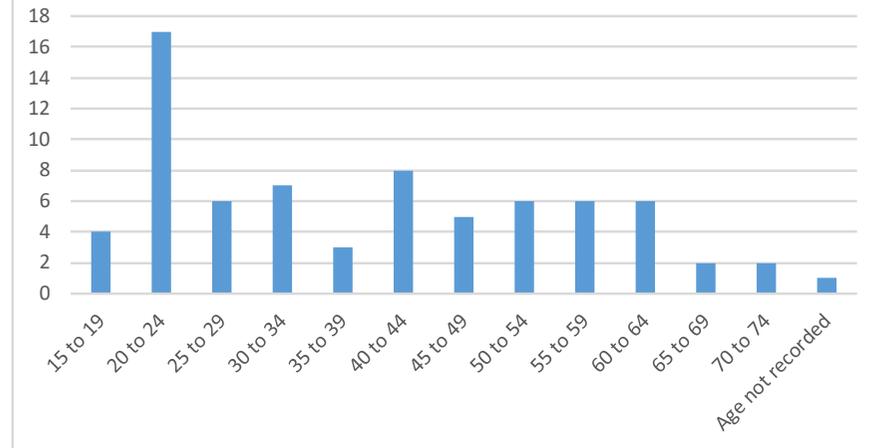


Accidental Drownings 2019  
No intention of entering the water



44% of people who accidentally drowned in 2019, had no intention of entering the water. (99 of 223)

Presence of alcohol and/or drugs 2019



## Launch - 26 April

### NFCC Activity

- NFCC Drowning Prevention Lead will write to each service and stakeholders to gather support for the campaign.
- **NFCC Water Safety Webinar - 20th April 2021**  
This webinar is aimed at anyone working within areas with inshore water venues or coastal settings. £30 pp ex VAT  
[Find out more](#)

#### Suggested social media messages for launch day

This week is @NFCC\_FireChiefs drowning prevention campaign. @Name of FRS is supporting to raise awareness of the risk of accidental drowning and reduce the 223 deaths that occurred in 2019 in the UK #BeWaterAware



Short animation with 2019 statistics overview available in resources and is suggested content

Look out for #BeWaterAware for information on enjoying activities in and around water, in the safest way possible. We will also be sharing advice on what to do if you or someone else is in trouble in the water

### FRS activity ahead of week

- Ahead of the campaign please check any web content and messaging to ensure it is still up to date and in line with national water safety messaging. This includes reviewing any videos and leaflets. If you have any questions, please email [communications@nationalfirechiefs.org.uk](mailto:communications@nationalfirechiefs.org.uk)
- Issue a press release about the campaign to your contacts. There is a suggested release in the toolkit but feel free to create your own or use a local case study or statistics to highlight your service's drowning prevention work.
- Use this toolkit as a guide for water safety messages throughout the year. The toolkit includes coastal messages and inland. If you are not a coastal service we advise using coastal messages ahead of holiday seasons when your audience may travel to coastal areas.

#### Schedule a social media message ahead of campaign week @ 09:00hrs 19 April

You can use message below or tailor to suit your needs. Next week is @NFCC\_FireChiefs drowning prevention and water safety week. Look out for #BeWaterAware for messages and advice to help you enjoy the water safely.



# Press Release

**As the current Covid-19 restrictions ease it is anticipated many people will head to coastal locations and inland water beauty spots. Few people would think they might become a water incident statistic. But the fact is in the UK in 2019 more people died from accidental drowning than cyclists did on the road.**

The National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Be Water Aware campaign will run from 26th April - 2nd May. @NameofFRS is taking part to encourage people not to be complacent when spending time in and around water. The aim is to encourage people to be safe by being aware of the risks.

Following simple advice will help reduce the 223 accidental drownings reported in 2019 and the many more injuries, which can be lifechanging, following water related incidents.

The advice includes:

- Never swim alone in case you need help
- Don't drink alcohol when undertaking water related activities, it impairs judgement and your ability to swim
- Avoid walking routes near water if you have been drinking alcohol
- Don't dive or jumping straight into open water, this can cause potentially fatal cold water shock even on the warmest day
- Actively supervise children in and around water - drowning can happen fast and silently
- If you find yourself unexpectedly in the water, don't panic, extend your arms and legs out and float on your back until the effect of cold water shock pass
- Never enter the water to try and rescue someone, call 999 and ask for the Fire Service if inland and the Coastguard if you are at the coast

**NFCC's Drowning Prevention Lead Dawn Whittaker said:**

**"We want people to enjoy spending time in and around water safely and that's why we are asking people to be water aware. By highlighting this issue and making sure simple safety messages reach them, we hope to reduce the number of these needless and preventable deaths."**

**You may wish to include numbers or examples of incidents from your local area and a quote from a relevant person in your FRS.**

Look out for #BeWaterAware on social media for more information and advice.

# In An Emergency - 27th April

## Video content for FRS use

If your own service has suitable video content please use it or feel free to use the below :

- **RNLI Float to Live**  
**Float to live embed code (suitable for coast and inland)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OBCFEEZe1U>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMuCyARIZ98>
- **What to do if you unexpectedly fall into the water ( River ) -**  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=7higoEbm96M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7higoEbm96M)
- **Water rescue incident -**  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVX3GAMm\\_AI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVX3GAMm_AI)
- **What to do if you fall into water ( canal )**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdP-bs\\_pzhU&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdP-bs_pzhU&t=3s)
- **What to do if you find someone in the water (canal)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiXC0Xjcb4&t=3s>

## If you find yourself unexpectedly in the water - Float to Live

This is agreed national messaging and is suitable for inland and coastal water. The messaging was developed by RNLI as part of their Respect the Water campaign.

More information can be found here [www.respectthewater.com](http://www.respectthewater.com)

### The message

If you fall into cold water unexpectedly, your instinct is to try and swim - fight the water. This will tire you quickly. Cold water shock can also make you gasp, breathing in water and more likely to drown. If you float the initial effects of cold water shock can pass, you will regain control of your breathing. The best way to do this is to float on your back.

**Resources from RNLI in English and Welsh to support this life saving message can be accessed here:**

<https://www.respectthewater.com/get-involved/downloads/>

**Welsh FRS - suitable video in Welsh resources with float to live and who to call messages for your use courtesy of SWFRS**



## Suggested social media messaging

44% of people who accidentally drowned in 2019 had no intention of entering the water. Would you know what to do if you fell in? #FloatToLive #BeWaterAware ( Link to RNLI Float to Live Video)

If you see someone in trouble in the water do you know who to call for help? Call 999 and ask for Fire Service inland, and @HMCoastguard if you are at the coast #BeWaterAware

# Activities Near Water - 28th April & 1st May

WAID data informs us that many people who accidentally drowned actually had no intention of entering the water. (See statistics - no intention of entering the water 2019).

Some resources in the toolkit will be suitable to use after heavy rain/flooding and during hot spells beyond the campaign week. So feel free to add to your advice beyond the week.

- Engage with groups whose members might be likely to undertake activities near water. Examples might include waterside clear-up groups, running and walking groups. They can help spread the word and encourage people to be active and safer.
- Ensure messages around what to do and who to call in an emergency are shared, as well as spreading awareness of the issue.

## Suggested Social Media Messages

- Do you love to spend time around water? Make sure you know what you should do if either you or some else falls in. 44% of people who drowned in 2019 did not expect to enter the water #BeWaterAware #RespectTheWater
- Never enter the water to rescue your dog - who will rescue you? Most dogs manage to scramble out - some owners are not so lucky #BeWaterAware
- Daniel miraculously survived a drowning incident on a night out. One step in the wrong direction near water and he nearly lost his life #BeWaterAware (social media version of Daniel's story in resources)
- Driving through flood water is the number 1 cause of death during flooding. #BeWaterAware and turn around and take a different route
- We all love a clifftop view. But cliffs may not be as sturdy as they look, beware of sheer drops, eroding edges and falling rocks and stay back to @HMCoastguard #BeWaterAware #RespectTheWater
- Careful not to lose your footing on your waterside stroll. River banks can be affected changing water levels or dry weather. keep clear of the edge and #BeWaterAware #RespectTheWater
- If you've been out with your mates, plan your route home away from water. 33% of accidental drownings in 2019 involved drink and/or drugs #BeWaterAware

# Activities In Water - 29th April & 2nd May

Water safety advice is about encouraging people to spend time in and around the water in the safest way possible. It is not about discouraging people from enjoying the water.

## Open Water Swimming

There are many people who enjoy swimming in open water and are able to [risk assess their wellbeing and the conditions](#). If people would like to enjoy outdoor swimming the advice is to ensure they are doing this in the safest way possible. Outdoor/wild swimmers should not be discouraged from taking up this activity but rather encouraged to do it in the safest way possible - which the majority do! It is for this reason that NFCC discourage the message - no lifeguard, no swimming. It is not appropriate to cover the wide range of people who swim and at worst alienates some of your potential local water safety advocates!

Information about outdoor swimming and safety advice can be found here <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Be-Water-Aware---Outdoor-swimming/73272>. Feel free to replicate this information on your website and add some local links to your website for local outdoor swimming groups and venues.

It is worth noting that outdoor swimming saw an increase during the covid pandemic - possibly due to the mental health benefits, people wanting to spend time outdoors and of course due to the closure of pools.

More information about the trends in outdoor swimming can be found in the Trends in Outdoor Swimming Report - from Outdoor Swimmer - this is available in your resources in Activities in water and not for public use but and well worth a read to understand more about this increasingly popular activity. [Additionally there are a number of useful articles around water safety and a venue finder on their website.](#)

## Swimming

We must be careful not to confuse the audience above with those that jump into water on a hot day with no knowledge of the risks or safety advice. Risks are use of alcohol when swimming, peer pressure to enter the water, jumping in, swimming in unsuitable locations (such as reservoirs). For this audience it is advisable to say **it is safest to swim** at a lifeguarded location/beach.

There is additional advice in the away from home section which can assist with safety advice.

## **Inflatables ( Tailor information for inland if this is an issue for your area such as in reservoirs, rivers and lakes and if you are inland use messages to warn coastal day trippers) Inflatables video in resources from @HMCoastguard and @RNLI**

Inflatables are designed to be used in pools. They are one of the most common reasons the RNLI are deployed. They should not be used in the sea, where tide and the wind can pull them out from the shore very quickly.

We strongly advise against using inflatables in the sea, if you do use them at the beach, then:

- Always use them on a lifeguarded beach, in between the red and yellow flags.
- Keep them near the shore and if being used by children, supervise them at all times.
- Never use an inflatable when the orange windsock is flying.
- Do not take them out in big waves.

## Tombstoning

This is jumping or diving into water from height and is commonly seen both inland and in coastal areas. It tends to be thrill seeking behaviour- so warnings already in place such as signage can often be ignored.

The risks are:

- Water depth can change - so water may be shallower than expected this may be tidal at the coast but can also occur inland after dry spells
- You may not know what is beneath the water (such as submerged rocks)
- Cold water shock
- Currents and waves can sweep people away

There can often be an element of peer pressure and/or drink drugs involved in this activity.

Since 2004 HM Coastguard has dealt with more than 200 incidents of tombstoning with 70 injuries and 20 deaths. (figures don't include inland FRS figures, but you may have your own you can include in messaging or target particular locations where this activity tends to happen). There is visual in resources which has can be tailored to coastal or inland and use the appropriate risks for the bodies of water in your area in the message accompanying the visual.

## Suggested Social Media Messaging

- Even if your child can swim you must actively supervise them - half of children who drown have some swimming ability #BeWaterAware
- Whether you are going on a beach holiday in the UK or abroad, take a minute to find a lifeguarded beach and obey the safety flags. It's safer to #BeWaterAware
- Even on a hot day the water can be very cold. Jumping into open water to swim or cool down can lead to cold water shock, which can lead to drowning. Enter the water by walking in so you can easily and safely get back out and this also allows your body to acclimatise to the water #BeWaterAware
- Outdoor swimming has becoming really popular and is great for fitness and mental health. If you are thinking of taking the plunge then make sure you see our safety advice and better still join a club for support and guidance #BeWaterAware ( link to safety advice on NFCC website from above or your own)
- Inflatables can be fun but keep them for the pool. They can easily get swept out to sea by winds and currents, this risks the lives of those using inflatables and the responders that come to help #BeWaterAware #RespectTheWater

# Away From Home - 30th April

Even if drowning incidents in your local area are low, we know that many drownings occur when people are away from home, either in the UK or abroad. At the moment, we only know where drownings occurred but not where the person was from. Anecdotally, we do know you are at a greater risk of drowning if you are not familiar with the area.

Give the advice so people have the knowledge when away from home. Therefore, even an inland FRS may wish to ensure they have advice for people when visiting the coast such as asking for coastguard/use of inflatables and cliff safety. This is particularly important this year as we anticipate many more people will aim to holiday both at home or abroad if restrictions allow.

Use information in this pack to remind people to Be Water Aware throughout the year - bank holidays, during the summer and when good weather is forecast.

## Suggested Social Media Messaging

- Whether you are going on a beach holiday in the UK or abroad, take a minute to find a lifeguarded beach and obey the safety flags. It's safer to #BeWaterAware
- It might feel like we've missed out on a lot in the past year, but if you are planning a getaway and want to enjoy your time near water safely, please don't miss out on our water safety advice and #BeWaterAware #RespectTheWater <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Be-Water-Aware-on-Holiday->

## Holiday abroad case study - Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (if appropriate due to C-19 restrictions)

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service worked with the family and friends of Jason Varghese and his cousin Joel Aniyankunj. Both teenagers drowned on holiday in 2018.

**Social media:** [www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/news/gmfrs-is-working-with-loved-ones-to-remind-people-of-open-water-dangers/](http://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/news/gmfrs-is-working-with-loved-ones-to-remind-people-of-open-water-dangers/)

**Full Film:** [www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/staying-safe/what-we-do/seasonal-safety/water-safety-advice/](http://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/staying-safe/what-we-do/seasonal-safety/water-safety-advice/)

## StayWise

StayWise is a free digital, safety education library led by NFCC and brought to you by the UK emergency services and a number of national safety organisations.

The site has a number of water safety educational resources provided by partners which can be accessed by Fire Services, teachers and parents/carers suitable for the younger key stages. You can find suitable resources here <https://staywise.co.uk/campaign/nfcc-water-awareness-week/>

The resources are free to use, easy to access and can be used to encourage water safety awareness. Take a look for activities which you can share during campaign week and beyond.