



Campaign

BE WATER AWARE

22nd – 28th April 2024

#BeWaterAware

Toolkit for fire and rescue services

Be Water Aware

Introduction

We want people to enjoy time in, on and around the water safely. Every year people drown in coastal and inland waters but many of these deaths are preventable.

Be Water Aware is part of coordinated action to achieve a 50% reduction of accidental drownings between 2016 and 2026 - one of the objectives set out in the [UK Drowning Prevention Strategy](#).

The campaign is timed to run at the time of the year when accidental drownings begin to increase, and we need to start to raise awareness ahead of summer peaks in drowning incidents. Many messages and resources in the toolkit can be used throughout the year and can be used to compliment other weeks of action.

The [National Water Safety Forum \(NWSF\)](#) members are a range of organisations and they have developed a calendar of water safety campaigns to run throughout the year. You can support these depending on local risk and need.

NWSF members together created the [Respect the Water](#) campaign – this is the national campaign for all members and compliments the campaigns run by individual members. You can use the resources at any time of the year. All messaging as part of Respect the Water and NWSF member campaigns is consistent and agreed national messaging.

National statistics

Drowning statistics are produced by NWSF each year. [You can access the reports on the website](#)

Main statistics relevant to Be Water Aware are below. They cover the period 2022 to 2023. A short video has been produced in resources to support some of the statistics.

New statistics are released around the end of May or beginning of June each year. So, check you are using the latest statistics if you need them for summer messaging.

226 accidental fatalities

26% (58) of accidental fatalities were under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol

83% Male 17% Female (4 out of 5 were male)

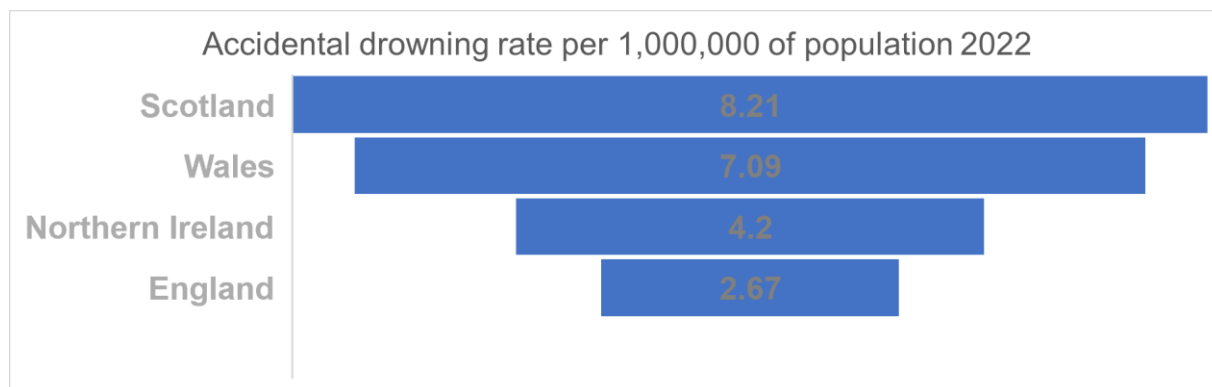
Males 20-29 years old and males 50-59 years old were the highest groups for accidental fatalities.

40% of people who accidentally drowned had no intention of entering the water.

Recreational activities accounted for 58% of accidental fatalities.

60% of accidental fatalities were inland and 40% coastal (2016 - 10 excluded)

Scotland and Wales had the highest accidental fatality rates – more than double that of England



Messages to support Be Water Aware

Ahead of the week

Next week we are supporting @NFCC_FireChiefs drowning prevention and water safety week. Look out for #BeWaterAware for advice to help you enjoy the water safely

<https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/campaigns/be-water-aware/>



This week is @NFCC_FireChiefs drowning prevention campaign. @Name of FRS is supporting to raise awareness of the risk of accidental drowning and reduce these preventable deaths in the UK.

You can find out more here <https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/campaigns/be-water-aware/>
#BeWaterAware



Unintentional entering of the water

[An advice page for runners and walkers is on the NFCC website which you can link to or use to create your own webpage.](#)

Do you love to spend time around water? Stay safe - 40% of people who accidentally drowned in 2022 had no intention of entering the water. Would you know what to do if you or a loved one fell in? #BeWaterAware #FloatToLive



Careful not to lose your footing on your waterside stroll or run. Riverbanks and coastal paths can be unstable. Stick to proper pathways and keep clear of the edge <https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/campaigns/be-water-aware/water-safety-tips-for-runners-and-walkers/> #BeWaterAware



Never enter the water to rescue your dog - who will rescue you? Most dogs manage to scramble out - some owners are not so lucky <https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/campaigns/be-water-aware/water-safety-tips-for-runners-and-walkers/> #BeWaterAware



Stay together and away from water when drinking. 26% of people who accidentally drowned in 2022 had alcohol and/or drugs in their system. Don't let man down become man drowned #BeWaterAware



If you've been out with your mates, plan your route home away from water. 26% of accidental drownings in 2022 involved drink and/or drugs so stay together and stay safe. #BeWaterAware

Swimming

Many people swim safely in open water because they take the necessary precautions and are fully aware of the risks and how to reduce them. Swimmers in this context is people ill prepared for a swim or unaware of the risks such as inexperienced outdoor swimmers going for a dip to cool down on a hot day.

The water may look inviting but even on a warm day the water can be cold. It doesn't matter if you're a strong swimmer. Jumping into the water to cool off can lead to cold water shock, which can result in drowning <https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/campaigns/be-water-aware/cold-water-shock/> #BeWaterAware #FloatToLive



Jumping into water can lead to cold water shock.



If you start to struggle in the water
Tilt your head back with ears submerged
Relax, breathe normally
Move your hands to help you float
Spread your arms and legs out

Once your breathing is controlled, call for help or swim to safety

<https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/campaigns/be-water-aware/cold-water-shock/> #BeWaterAware

[See information in this toolkit about resources which include statics and video from RNLI](#)

Keep yourself and your mates safe. Jumping into water has risks. Water depths can change and there could be hidden debris. Every year people need rescuing, suffer serious injuries, or even die because they jump into the unknown #BeWaterAware



Enjoy water safely.
Don't jump into the unknown.



What to do in an emergency – Float to Live

RNLI Float to Live resources have been updated since last year thanks to further lifesaving research. The messaging has been made clearer on how to float to live taking into account we can all float to live but we might all do it slightly differently.

FRS should use the updated assets (available in English and Welsh) from the [RNLI Float to Live toolkit](#). They are suitable for coastal and inland waters and can be used to support Be Water Aware and water safety messaging throughout the year.

If someone else falls into the water – Call, Tell, Throw

If you see someone in trouble in the water, remember this lifesaving advice

Call 999

Tell them to float on their back

Throw something to help them float

#BeWaterAware #RespectTheWater



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

Along waterways you may see throwline boards. Take a moment to read them. The more people that know how to use throwlines and what to do in an emergency, the more chance of lives being saved. See this useful advice from @Camsfrs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0of3BpumBn0> #BeWaterAware



Who to call

The national message is to call 999. This is because there are some areas of the UK where you need to ask for the police or HM Coastguard on inland waterways. More information about this can be found on [the Respect the Water website](#) under the Which Emergency Service? section

There are a number of national assets via Respect the Water



There will be specific local locations where FRS can use the call the fire service message in local level comms.

Template Press release

Be Water Aware to reduce accidental drownings

In 2022, 266 lives were lost to accidental drowning in the UK. These deaths are preventable tragedies, and **Name of FRS** is joining the call for people to stay safe in and around water.

The National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC's) Be Water Aware campaign runs from 22-28 April. Its aim is to raise awareness about the risk of accidental drowning and providing safety advice ahead of the warmer months.

Statistics reveal 40% of people who accidentally drowned had no intention of entering the water. Slips trips and falls were often the cause of these accidents.

Many people also underestimate the dangers of jumping into water or taking a dip to cool off especially those with limited experience of outdoor swimming. Unseen hazards and cold water shock can mean even strong swimmers get into trouble.

Males account for 87% of these accidental fatalities, 60% of which are in inland waters such as rivers, reservoirs and lakes.

Simple tips to help stay safe include:

- Stick to proper pathways and stay clear of the water's edge
- Don't enter the water after drinking alcohol
- Walk a safe route home after drinking, with friends and away from water
- Cold water shock can kill, walking into the water rather than jumping in can help reduce the risk.

As the statistics show, many people don't expect their time near water to turn into an emergency, so knowing what to do if you or someone else is in trouble in the water is lifesaving advice.

If someone is in trouble in the water, the best way to help is by staying calm, staying on land, and remember Call, Tell, Throw:

- **Call** 999 for the emergency services
- **Tell** the struggling person to float on their back.
- **Throw** them something that floats.

If you find yourself in trouble in the water, remember to 'Float to Live'. Tilt your head back with your ears submerged. Relax and breathe normally. Move your hands to help stay afloat. Spread your arms and legs out. Once your breathing is controlled, call for help or swim to safety.

Dawn Whittaker, Drowning Prevention Lead for NFCC said: "Be Water Aware is about helping people spend time in and around water safely.

"We encourage people to reduce their risk of drowning by making safe choices around water and to know what to do if an emergency should happen.

“Simple advice to ‘Call, tell, throw’ and ‘Float to Live’ are lifesaving messages which fire services share to help reduce these preventable deaths and the devastating impact they have on families and communities.”

Insert quote from **Name of FRS** any community engagement activities

Include link to water safety advice on your webpages if you wish

For more information about the ‘Be Water Aware’ campaign please visit: www.nfcc.org.uk/bewateraware and look out for #BeWaterAware on social media.

END

Additional information (please include any additional info from FRS)

NFCC’s Be Water Aware is part of coordinated campaign approach under the Respect the Water campaign to achieve a 50% reduction of accidental drownings between 2016-2026 - one of the objectives set out in the [National Water Safety Forum’s \(NWSF\) UK Drowning Prevention Strategy](#).

Statistics from WAID produced for NWSF coordinated by RoSPA. 2022 statistics are the latest available. <https://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid>

Case studies

Colleagues from FRS have produced recent case studies which can be used by FRS to support messages in this toolkit. Please contact the FRS if wish to discuss the details of either case study, please email communications@nfcc.org.uk if you need contacts.

Thando's Story – Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service

Thando Ndlovu had just turned 15 when died after getting into difficulty in the River Trent in July 2021. Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service worked with his parents to share his story and raise awareness of the risks of jumping into and swimming in open water.



Suggested messages

In 2021, Thando Ndlovu tragically drowned in the River Trent. He was just 15 years old. Swimming in open water can have fatal consequences.

Watch and share Thando's Story to help prevent accidental water deaths:

https://youtu.be/2Jz5t3BA6rQ?si=lfaq1J_c5QLQio06 #BeWaterAware #ThandosStory

“If it happened to him it can happen to anyone...”

Thando Ndlovu was just 15 years old when he tragically drowned in the River Trent in 2021.

His parents are bravely speaking out to raise awareness of jumping or swimming in open water and help prevent accidental water deaths.

Swimming in open water such as canals, lakes, rivers and quarries can have fatal consequences.

Watch and share Thando's Story to help prevent accidental water deaths:

https://youtu.be/2Jz5t3BA6rQ?si=lfaq1J_c5QLQio06 #BeWaterAware #ThandosStory

Robbie's story – East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, HM Coastguard, RNLI

East Sussex FRS worked with partners to launch this powerful story of Robbie Jones who lost his father Gareth in January 2021, whilst walking the family dog on a beach.



[Robbie's story](#)

Gareth Jones drowned due to going into the water after his dog. He left behind a wife and three children. His son Robbie tells the devastating impact of such a loss. It's a reminder that underestimating the power of the sea can be fatal & can happen to anyone. #RespectTheWater #BeWaterAware

If any fire and rescue services have case studies they want to include on the Respect the Water website please let us know. Email communications@nfcc.org.uk and we can help start the conversation.

StayWise

There was a 46% increase in the number of accidental fatalities amongst children in 2022 compared to the 5-year average.

90% were reported to have occurred inland.

[StayWise](#) and [StayWise Cymru](#) are NFCC's education platforms and have a number of resources and lesson plans available to support water safety education. These are aligned to national messaging and curriculums. Resources cover a range on activities for different times of year, including ice safety and the water safety code.

We encourage FRS staff involved in community engagement and education to utilise the resources for young people and ensure they have created a blue light account to access the full range.

Teachers can also create an account to access the resources and we encourage FRS to ensure the platform is shared with schools so they too can benefit from the resources.

Can you include a link to StayWise water safety activities and resources for children on FRS webpages?

StayWise messages

There was a 46% increase in accidental drownings in children in 2022 compared to the 5-year average. Water safety education is crucial, see StayWise resources for children <https://staywise.co.uk/calendar/campaign/nfcc-be-water-aware> #BeWaterAware

Even if your child can swim you must actively supervise them in and around water. Half of children who drown have some swimming ability. Find out more about staying safe in and around water with @StayWiseUK <https://staywise.co.uk/calendar/campaign/nfcc-be-water-aware> #BeWaterAware

Are you sure your child knows how to stay safe in and around water? @StayWiseUK has resources to help children learn about water safety <https://staywise.co.uk/calendar/campaign/nfcc-be-water-aware> #BeWaterAware



The Waterside Responder Scheme

The Waterside Responder Scheme was developed by RNLI and piloted by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service in 2017.

The Scheme can train staff employed by businesses based near water, so they have basic water safety skills and knowledge. The training ranges from enabling them to provide water safety advice to the public and basic incident response such as how to contact the emergency services and how to use a throwline. Businesses will then have a throwline for the premises so trained staff can assist in rescuing someone from the water ahead of the arrival of emergency services.

There are real benefits to this training being delivered to all kinds of businesses near water but particularly night-time economy businesses.



The training is free and has been delivered to more than 260 venues across the UK which has saved lives.

Fire and rescue services can encourage businesses to receive the free training, or you could explore whether this is training you can complete with RNLI to help deliver training to businesses.

[In 2023 as part of the campaign week a new sign was launched so venues that have had this training can display that they have a throwline on site.](#)

[More information and how to get in touch with RNLI about the scheme can be found on the RNLI website](#)