

Keeping Communities Safe Around Water

KEY MESSAGES

This document is for operatives working near quarry lakes or similar water filled voids and individuals involved with community engagement work. It is not intended for distribution to members of the public.



The majority of deaths involving members of the public in quarries are water related. Educating the public about the hazards associated with open water will help to minimise these avoidable and tragic incidents in quarry lakes and other types of inland water such as reservoirs, rivers and canals.

The briefing notes summarise key water safety messages being used by a wide range of organisations and guidance on what to do in an emergency. These messages can be shared in discussions with members of the public and your colleagues.

These notes were originally developed by the Wales Water Safety Group and included input from RNLI, RoSPA, Swim Wales, the emergency services, MPA and the water utilities.



Key messages



- **Respect the water.** Whatever your activity and your ability, the water can always catch you out as it's easy to underestimate its power.
- **Stay safe by spotting the dangers,** you may swim well in a warm indoor swimming pool but that does not mean you will be able to swim in the cold water of the seas, rivers, quarries or reservoirs.
- **Don't ignore safety advice,** special flags and notices that warn you of any dangers. Know what each sign means and what they're telling you to do.
- **Never swim alone.** If you get into danger in open water, there will be someone who can get help. Children should always be accompanied by an adult.
- **You should never go in the water after drinking.** Alcohol is a contributing factor in many water related incidents as it seriously impairs your judgement, reactions and ability to swim.
- The effect on the body after entering cold water is often underestimated. **Cold water shock can be a precursor to drowning.**
- **Take a minute.** The initial effects of cold water pass in less than a minute so don't try to swim straight away.
- **Relax and float on your back to catch your breath.** Try to get hold of something that will help you float.
- **Keep calm** then call for help or swim for safety if you're able.
- Anything below 15°C is defined as cold water and **seriously affects breathing**, as well as movement.
- Did you know the average UK sea temperature is just 12°C. Quarry lakes can be much colder than that, even in the summer, the **risk of cold water shock is significant most of the year.**
- It only takes **half a pint of water** to enter the lungs for a fully grown person to start drowning. Make sure you get medical care immediately.
- Taking part in leisure activities, in and around the water, is great fun. Our messages are not about stopping communities from enjoying the waterways of the UK, but simply **raising awareness of the potential risks and encouraging them to stay safe.**
- **50% of people who drown,** never expected to end up in the water.

The dangers of water



- **It is very cold** and could cause cold water shock or hypothermia.
- There may be **hidden pumps or currents** which could make it difficult to swim back to shore.
- It can be **difficult to get out** e.g. steep, slimy or crumbling banks.
- It can be **deeper than it looks**, there can be sudden changes in depth and it can be difficult to estimate how deep the water is.
- In the water, there may be **hidden rubbish or debris** e.g. shopping trolleys, broken glass and underwater weeds can wrap around your legs.
- If swimming in rivers, quarries or reservoirs there will be **no lifeguards around to help**.
- The water may be **polluted and cause illnesses**.

In an emergency

- **Ring 999**, try and give accurate location information - is there a sign?
- If the individual is panicking shout **"Stay calm and float"**. If the individual is capable shout **"Stay calm, swim to me"**.
- **Throw them something** to help them keep above the surface.
- **Reach if possible** to help them.
- **Don't go into the water** you can become another casualty.
- **Keep eyes on them** and gather information for the emergency services.
- Carry a means for **calling for help** - remember mobile phones may not work in remote sites.
- If you see someone who you think may be planning on harming themselves, **call 999**.



Contacts & Resources

MPA has developed a range of quarry warning signs that can be ordered from a number of different manufacturers.

Please ensure that location information for the emergency services such as site name, address, grid reference or postcode is incorporated on some of your quarry signage.



- The MPA guidelines on the management of public safety and active and disused sites can be downloaded from **www.safequarry.com**
- Regularly review your site's public safety risk assessment. please inform MPA of the location of any of your high risk sites.
- Please support the **MPA Stay Safe Campaigns** and include safety messages in your community engagement programmes.
- Contact David Yelland at **david.yelland@mineralproducts.org** to order free resources to support your community engagement work. See MPA website – the stay safe section to view what is available
- Please view and share the campaign **Facebook page (stay safe stay out of quarries)**. This provides recent examples of incidents, links to resources produced by MPA and a wide range of other organisations.

For more information or help please e-mail
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