

Water Safety Ireland

Keep floating inflatable toys away from open water



Remember: Inflatable toys are not safe for persons to float upon in open waters. Never be tempted to swim out after a floating toy.

Water Safety Ireland are asking members of the public who have inflatable toys, such as lookalike dinghies, canoes, kayaks, lilos, rings, sharks, seals, birds and other assorted fish and cetaceans, to consider disposing of them for good and not purchase them again when visiting open waters. Inflatable toys present a drowning risk and tragically in 2020, two people in Ireland lost their lives as a result of these toys.



Lifeguards trained by Water Safety Ireland have seen an increase in the use of inflatable toys. Roger Sweeney of Water Safety Ireland points out that they are not suitable for use as recreational craft and can be lethal in open water. He explains that drownings typically occur when a person overestimates their ability and underestimates the risk. The risk that an inflatable toy can take a person out of their depth and out of their comfort zone is very high due to Ireland's changeable

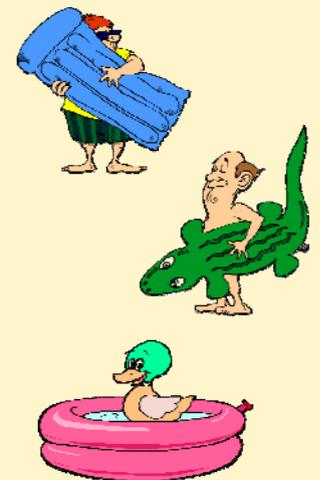
offshore winds and the range of our tides. It is even worse if the toy deflates and the person tries to swim or paddle a partly deflated toy to safety. Cooler water can quickly cool the muscles needed for swimming and hidden currents can make this swim very difficult and sometimes impossible. These toys provide a false sense of security and should be avoided.



The Irish Coast Guard and Water Safety Ireland are appealing to the public to be mindful of the drowning risk associated with the use of inflatable toys in open water. They appeal to parents and guardians never to allow inflatable toys to be used at rivers, lakes or beaches as the devices are vulnerable to the slightest breeze or current and can take a child away from shore and into danger. Equally the temporary loss of such a device could attract children or adults to try and retrieve them from the water and thereby get into a life-threatening situation. Good weather has already tempted people into using inflatable toys which has quickly led them into danger and the need for rescue services to respond.

Gerard O'Flynn of the Irish Coast Guard explains that Search and Rescue (SAR) resources including Coast Guard helicopters, RNLi lifeboats, Coast Guard units and community rescue boat services are no strangers to such rescues. Their hearts go out those that suffer a tragic loss in such circumstances and they are mindful of a number of very near misses whereby children were swept out to sea and were rescued following a full scale Search and Rescue operation.

If you see somebody in trouble in the water or along the coast use VHF Ch 16 or Dial 112 and ask for the Coast Guard



These floating toys are a common sight in the Mediterranean where, in comparison to Ireland, there are less incidents with them. Continental weather brings normally light or no winds or onshore sea breezes at beaches. Floats there are more often blown ashore and not out to sea. The opposite is the case in Ireland. Strong and changeable winds throughout summer means these toys can be blown offshore.

Water Safety Ireland
The Long Walk, Galway
www.watersafety.ie

Water Safety Ireland have produced this video for children outlining the dangers posed by inflatables on open water:
<https://watersafety.ie/organisations-warn-about-the-dangers-of-inflatables-on-open-water/>

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