

Water Safety transcript

Kevin Lough, occupational health and safety manager: "Water safety is so important because over 400 people on average drown in the UK every year. Almost half of these, drownings occur in inland water such as reservoirs, lakes and rivers.

"July and August statistically account for the majority of deaths in terms of drownings. Of those there are many which are attributed to people voluntarily either jumping in or going swimming in rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

"We're targeting a particular group. Secondary school, teenagers in particular because those are the groups which in during the summer periods are off school and will be venturing out into the countryside areas, open water locations and basically interacting with those sort of hazards.

"Cold water shock is a particular issue when people haven't acclimatised to the water temperature. When people enter the water, sometimes that water temperature can be ten or 15 degrees lower than the air temperature outside and this causes some physiological and psychological responses from the body.

"Firstly when people enter the water and they haven't acclimatised to the water temperature, what can happen is that there is a gasp reflex. This result in water being inhaled into the lungs rather than air and that can cause immediate problems.

"Secondly, the skin temperature lowers suddenly. This can result in closure of blood vessels, restriction of blood flow, this results in the heart working overtime to try and compensate for those factors. What also happens is that blood pressure increases, breathing increases rapidly and then can increase by over ten times its natural state.

"Following on from this, psychology there's a feeling of panic, disorientation and distress. It's a combination of these factors which can induce, in some cases, heart failure and this can happen in relatively young people, those who are fit and healthy and even those who consider themselves to be very good swimmers and have good swim ability.

"Other hazards in rivers, lakes, reservoirs can be rocks and other debris hidden under the water. There are also strong currents which are not visible to the eye when people are on bank sites for example. And also Wear structures as well which are particular hazardous in terms of the force of nature of those, and when people do get into those sorts of situations, it's extremely difficult to get out safely.

"There are various sensible precautions I would take. For parents and carers, I would encourage you to know where your children are going to play throughout the summer months, really discourage any areas where there may be particular remote, or they might have particularly difficulty swimming emergency assistance or help.

"Secondly be aware of those hazards in terms of the water temperature being extremely cold even in summer months. The temperature of the water can be extremely cold. Think about strong currents and other debris under the water. Think about, if you're going into the water, how you

going to get out. There's lots of areas where it's relatively easy to jump in but where there's steep bank sites, for example, that can be a particular problem where if you get into difficulty, it'll be extremely difficult getting out.

"You can find out more about this subject on Durham County Council's website."