



Portishead Lifeboat Station
Eastcliff
Portishead
BS20 7EA

With the School holidays approaching may I beg just a little of your time to talk about Water Safety. With more people than ever taking their holidays in the UK, the RNLI expect to be busier than usual and by bringing a few basic Water Safety messages to your attention we hope that you, or your family, will not become a casualty this summer.

Beaches will be crowded and we encourage you to use a beach with RNLI Lifeguards; details of which can be found on the RNLI website rnli.org.uk. RNLI Lifeguards patrol the beach to keep people safe and they do this by putting up flags to show if it is safe to go in the water. The Red Flag means do not go in the water, not even to paddle. This is the most important flag so please respond accordingly if it is flying. Red and Yellow Flags indicate an area where it is safe to swim, but only between the two Red and Yellow Flags. There is lots of detail on how to keep safe by the water on the RNLI website and please can I encourage you to look at that before you venture to the beach.

Locally we have other particular problems. Portishead Marina is a place for boats only and nobody should swim in the marina. There have been many instances where young people have been seen swimming in, or jumping into, the marina and this is very dangerous. Please persuade your youngsters not to do this. There are many underwater obstructions in which they can get entangled and, when they are swimming, their head is but a very small object in the water and virtually invisible to any boat on the move. It is impossible to know how deep the water is and jumping in is extremely hazardous and could lead to severe injury or death. I cannot stress how dangerous it is to swim in the marina so please make sure that your youngsters are aware of these dangers and do not attempt this activity.

Playing on, or jumping off the Pier is another extremely dangerous activity. The depth of water around the pier varies greatly and the currents caused by the tides are treacherous; to end up in the water here is very likely to end in drowning. Again, please explain these dangers to your youngsters and ask them not to venture on to the pier at all.

Finally, we experience the second highest tidal difference in the world here in Portishead which leads to very strong currents out in the Bristol Channel. It is also very easy to get cut off by an incoming tide because it moves so quickly. This is particularly hazardous when associated with the mud that surrounds our coast here and in Weston, Brean and Burnham. It is very easy to get stuck in the soft, sticky mud and impossible to get out without help. Sometimes that help cannot be sourced quickly enough and people drown. Please do not venture on to the mud anywhere, it could be fatal. This also applies to taking your car on to the beach. There have been many cases of cars getting stuck and ruined by an incoming tide, don't let yours become a statistic.

I am sorry this is a lot of do's and don't's but we want you to stay safe and enjoy the summer. Going to the beach is great, it just needs a little bit of thought to stay safe. Remember, if you are in trouble or you see someone in trouble by the coast, ring 999 and ask for the Coastguard. Have a great summer but please be safe. Thank you for reading this.

Geoff Vian, Water Safety Education Volunteer, Portishead Lifeboat