

Water-based deaths at lowest since 2018 – Water Safety Scotland

Water-related fatalities are at their lowest level since 2018, according to Water Safety Scotland's latest annual trend report, which contains analysis of data from the Water Incident Database (WAID).

The [report](#) also shows that water-related fatalities decreased during 2023 (94) when compared to 2022 (96) and provides detail on historical and baseline data in comparison to Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS).

The WAID Database is maintained by the National Water Safety Forum and gathers information related to water-based incidents.

Water Safety Scotland is a voluntary association of organisations and individuals whose main purpose is to understand the risks around water in Scotland and engage with partners to develop a consistent approach to the prevention of water related fatalities. The Steering Group of Water Safety Scotland is represented by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Police Scotland and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority. This variety of representation is intended to give a broad and balanced view of the strategic direction and leadership of WSS.

Carlene McAvoy, Founder of WSS and the Data Subgroup Chair, said:

"We expected to see accidental deaths rise as not recorded has decreased due to the improved dataset via the Drowning and Incident Review. However, we have actually seen a decrease in accidental fatalities in 2023.

"The recent figures for overall water-related fatalities shows a decrease - bringing the number of overall water-related fatalities down to its lowest level since 2018, when we saw 78 fatalities.

"Accidental water-related fatalities are also below the SDPS average via the introduction of the [Drowning and Incident Review](#) (DIR), a pioneering process created in Scotland which aims to gather all relevant data and information in order to systematically and rigorously review each accidental water-related incident with a view to preventing a future occurrence".

Water Safety Scotland continues to promote water safety through its assets including free education resources for teachers and practitioners and free consistent water safety messaging for partners to use across Scotland.

As summer approaches, Water Safety Scotland wants to remind the public to stay safe and follow the three part [Water Safety Code](#):

- Stop and Think, Spot the Dangers
- Stay Together, Stay Close
- In an Emergency, Call 999

Community Safety Minister Siobhian Brown said:

“Figures showing water related deaths are at their lowest since 2018 should be welcomed but we cannot be complacent. Any death is one too many and leaves a devastating impact on victim’s families and surrounding communities.

“The Scottish Government continues to take water safety very seriously. Through the Water Safety Action Plan we are taking a range of measures including improving awareness through training for children and young people and improving signage around Scotland’s open water.

“We would encourage everyone to follow the Water Safety Code: Stop and Think, Spot the Dangers, Stay Together, Stay Close and call 999 in an emergency.”

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- For further press information, interviews or photography, please contact: Jessica Barker: jbarker@rospa.com, 07719 059 414, or Joe Tinkler: jtinkler@rospa.com, 07785 540 349.

Notes to editors

- Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy targets a reduction of 50 per cent in the number of accidental drowning deaths, against a three-year average baseline of 96 (from 2013-2015). The strategy can be viewed at <https://www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/1213/scotlands-drowning-prevention-strategy.pdf>
- The Interim Review of the strategy was led by RoSPA and can be accessed here: <https://watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/1985/interim-review-scotlands-drowning-prevention-strategy.pdf>
- The 2023 trend report can be accessed online here: <https://www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk/practitioners-hub/water-safety-data/data-reports/>

- The WAID tables can be accessed online here: <https://nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid>
- The total figures for Scotland in 2023 (94 fatalities) include: accidental: 47, crime suspected: 1, not recorded: 7, suicide suspected: 39