

## THE RNLI IS THE CHARITY THAT SAVES LIVES AT SEA.

Since the RNLI was formed in 1824, our lifeboat crews and lifeguards have been keeping people like you safe, saving over 141,500 lives.



We operate over 237 lifeboat stations in the UK and Republic of Ireland. These provide a 24-hour search and rescue service along 19,000 miles of coastline and 100 nautical miles out to sea all year round.

Our lifeguards work with lifeboat crews to provide a seamless rescue service from the beach to the open sea. Our lifeguards patrol over 220 beaches around the UK and Channel Islands and, on average they respond to over 15,000 incidents every year.

Last year, lifeboat crew and lifeguards saved 378 lives.

As much as 95% of our lifeguards' work is preventative – they look out for potential problems before they develop into something worse, and give helpful safety advice and information to beach goers.



**If you see someone in difficulty,  
never attempt a rescue.  
Tell a lifeguard or dial 999 / 112  
and ask for coastguard**

Royal National Lifeboat Institution  
West Quay Road, Poole,  
Dorset, BH15 1HZ  
Tel: 0845 122 6999

Email: [RTW@rnli.org.uk](mailto:RTW@rnli.org.uk)  
[RNLI.org/RespectTheWater](http://RNLI.org/RespectTheWater)

**The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea**  
Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736). Registered charity number 20003326 in the Republic of Ireland

# RESPECT THE WATER, ENJOY THE COAST

## A GUIDE TO KEEPING SAFE AT THE BEACH





## A TRUE STORY

'Don't underestimate the sea - however experienced you think or feel you are.'

It started out as an ordinary day on the beach for the Robson family, for whom the area was familiar and comfortable. But they could never have imagined how the day would have ended and the unforgiving power of the sea.

The two Robson brothers (17 and 19) were in the water when conditions changed and they and others were caught in a powerful rip current. The sea conditions deteriorated and rapidly became messy and angry. People desperately fought together against the conditions and finally the brothers managed to make it back to shore. Tragically not everyone was so fortunate. Other people lost their lives to the ocean that day.

The Robsons were like any ordinary family visiting the coast, making the most of the beach, enjoying the sea and creating lots of holiday memories. But would you know what to do if you got into trouble? Do you know what the dangers are on your beach?

Mrs Robson: 'Our family has been significantly affected by what we saw and experienced on that day and it has taken time to come to terms with. I touched the reality of losing our precious boys to the sea and witnessed the tragic loss of lives.'

'With respect to those I offer you these words. Before you race to the beach and set up your camp for the day, before the kids rush into the sea - pause. Assess the sea, stand in the shallows, ask yourself; are there any unusual breaks in the wave patterns? Can you feel any strong currents? If yes, then move to another spot or beach. These small things could save lives.'

'Make sure everybody in your family knows what a rip current is and what to do if they get stuck in one. Have that conversation so that everybody knows what the dangers are.'

'The sea is immense, beautiful and a source of fun and excitement when things go to plan. But it is also powerful, unpredictable and unforgiving if things change, and they can very quickly with very little warning. Respect and knowledge are your defences, not just swimming skills and strength alone.'

'Learn as much as you can about the sea and the dangers on your beach. You can make a difference and help keep your family safe.'

## RIP CURRENTS

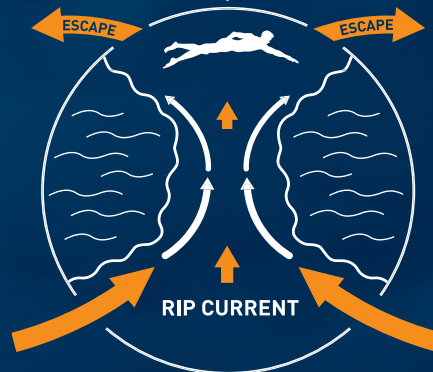
A rip is a strong current of water which flows away from the shoreline and can drag even the strongest swimmers out of their depth.

Rips are especially powerful in larger surf, but they're also found around the mouths of rivers, estuaries and man-made structures like piers and groynes.

Rips can catch even the most experienced beachgoers out, so read below to find out how to stay safe.



Rip current shown with coloured dye



## HOW TO SURVIVE A RIP

- Stay calm - don't panic.
- Raise your hand and shout for help.
- Keep hold of your board or inflatable to help you float.
- Don't swim against the rip or you'll get exhausted.
- Swim parallel to the beach until free of the rip, then make for shore.
- If you see someone in difficulty, never attempt a rescue. Tell a lifeguard or dial 999 / 112 and ask for coastguard.

Find out more: [RNLI.org/RespectTheWater](https://www.rnli.org/RespectTheWater)

## BEACH SAFETY

- Choose a lifeguarded beach.
- Check the weather forecast and tide times.
- Take notice of flags and safety signs.



### RED AND YELLOW FLAGS

Lifeguarded area. Safest area to swim, bodyboard and use inflatables.



### BLACK AND WHITE CHEQUERED FLAGS

For surfboards, stand-up paddleboards, kayaks, and other non-powered craft. Launch and recovery area for kitesurfers and windsurfers. Never swim or bodyboard here.



### RED FLAG

Danger! Never go in the water under any circumstances when the red flag is flying.



### ORANGE WINDSOCK

Indicates offshore or strong winds conditions. Never use inflatables when the windsock is flying.

No flags = No lifeguard service in operation

When there is no lifeguard service treat water with respect, not everyone can be saved

## COLD WATER SHOCK

The temperature of our waters can steal the air from your lungs and leave you helpless in seconds.

If you end up in the water unexpectedly:

- 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.