

news release

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For Immediate Release

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Know the risks of cooling off in open water this weekend

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and HM Coastguard are calling on people to respect the coastline this weekend and not unnecessarily put their lives at risk as the summer heatwave continues.

With temperatures expected to continue to climb on Saturday, more residents are expected to head to the coast to cool off. But residents are urged not to forget the dangers of open water.

The warning comes after firefighters and the Coastguard were called to help rescue a teenage girl who got into difficulty while swimming in Shoreham Harbour on Thursday evening.

Joint Fire Control mobilised the crew from Shoreham Fire Station and an East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service appliance from Hove at 6.09pm to support the Coastguard in rescuing the girl who was thought to have been in the water in the lock area for at least half an hour.

Shoreham Crew Manager Steve Eames said: "After jumping into the water, the girl was stung by a jellyfish, and despite being a competent swimmer she was unable to make her way back to the shore. Thankfully she was able to tread water and cling on to a flotation device the Coastguard had managed to get to her.

"Together with our Technical Rescue Unit we tried to talk her into the side, but she was clearly in a lot of pain from the jellyfish sting, and so we laid one of our short extension ladders across the pontoons to create a bridge. Our crew, wearing lifejackets, then made their way across the ladder and were able to rescue her from the water and reunite her with her family."

Marvin Smith is West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's National Resilience Flood Rescue Tactical Advisor. He added: "When the weather is like this, the first thing many of us think of is a trip to the beach. We want everyone to enjoy our coastline, but also to be aware of the dangers that come with it.

"Jumping into cold water can have a life-threatening impact, with cold water shock setting in almost immediately. You can very quickly find yourself in difficulty, even if you are a confident swimmer.

“If you are heading to the beach this weekend, please take extra care and don’t put yourself or others at risk.”

A spokesperson for HM Coastguard said: “Even if the weather is warm, the waters around the UK remain extremely cold throughout the year, with an average temperature of a chilly 11 degrees. If you fall into the water, you could suffer from cold water shock. Know how to enjoy the water safely for yourself and others and remember, if you see anyone in trouble at the coast, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.”

If you are heading to the water this weekend, please follow these simple steps:

- If you are going for a walk or run near water stick to proper pathways and stay clear of the water’s edge.
- If you are spending time near water make sure you are familiar with local safety information and children are fully supervised.
- If you've had alcohol don't enter the water.
- Be aware of rip tides and currents - they can drag you out to sea and are almost impossible to swim against.
- Never enter the water to try and help a person or animal - always call 999 and use any water rescue equipment if it is available.