



24 APRIL 2020

BE WATER AWARE – STAY HOME, SAVE LIVES

Firefighters and police officers are calling for people to Be Water Aware this weekend and to adhere to the governments Covid-19 advice to stay at home, save lives and protect the NHS.

During what is a national week of awareness in relation to water safety, firefighters have today been water rescue training at Milford Weir, only to come across several families with small children in wet suits paddling in the weir.

Group Manager Paul Hawker said: "I'm stunned to hear that during a global pandemic people are venturing out to the riverside to enjoy a leisurely afternoon.

"Not only is this against all the advice being issued by government to help prevent the spread of Covid-19 and to protect lives; the river itself is a dangerous place to be, especially for small children.

"It only takes a minute for a child, or an adult, to get into trouble in a river. Fast flowing hidden currents can easily sweep someone off their feet, especially a small child, and hidden objects, such as rocks and weeds can easily cause someone to get trapped.

"In July 2018 a 25 year old man tragically died at a well-known spot on the River Derwent, known locally as Pebble Beach, after becoming trapped in the weir. This underlines just how dangerous the river can be, especially for small children.

"With the sun set to shine again this weekend we are asking people to stay safe, stay at home and keep away from rivers and other open waterways."

Superintendent Steve Pont, said: "We understand the temptation of heading out to bodies of water in the warm weather.

“However, in the current climate we would ask people if this is something that they have to do and if it is in fact the most sensible course of action.

“Dependant on the situation you may be breaching the coronavirus legislation and, if not, then you will almost certainly not be following the request of our colleagues in the NHS to stay at home and save lives.

“On top of this bodies of water like rivers and lakes pose potential dangers that – at this moment – are not worth taking.

“If you get in to trouble the emergency services will have to come to your aid, putting them at greater risk of spreading the virus or contracting it themselves.

“I would ask people to think really hard before taking part in these type of activities and, if you can get your exercise in a different way, then please do so.”

ENDS