

DROWNING PREVENTION AND WATER SAFETY

I would be very grateful if you could share some vital water safety messages about drowning prevention with your pupils this term, possibly during an assembly and definitely before the start of the school summer holidays.

A sheet attached to the end of this letter, provides links to videos and websites from safety organisations with tips about how to keep safe whilst enjoying the water, whether inland or on the coast. I would particularly recommend the short video on 'Float to Live' produced by the RNLI and 'One last Breath' produced by Wales Water.

The UK's National Drowning Prevention Strategy's goal is to achieve by 2026 a 50% reduction in the circa 400 annual, accidental drownings. Raising awareness and educating the public about the risks of open water is one of the key drivers through which this will be achieved.

Sadly, young people, and in particular young males, are the group at highest risk of accidental drowning.

You may already have heard about the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Week - '[Be Water Aware](#)' being run by Fire and Rescue Services across the UK. Several other organisations such as the RLSS (Royal Life Saving Society) and the RNLI will also be running campaigns during 2018 with water safety messages.

UK quarry operators, who have responsibility for many quarry lakes and water filled voids, are keen to support these initiatives, particularly in areas that are close to sites that have been identified as potentially high risk. [Mineral Products Association \(MPA\)](#) is the trade association for the UK quarrying industry, and is co-ordinating on behalf of its members the support for these campaigns. **I have written to you because your school/college has been identified as being located in close proximity to a potentially high risk quarry with water, either an active or former site of minerals extraction.**

Quarry lakes and similar man made areas of open water such as reservoirs, can share a number of features; deep and very cold water, sudden and unexpected changes in water depth, steep or crumbling sides, concealed hazards beneath the water, underwater currents or pumps, weeds and submerged machinery that can entrap or injure, pollution or other forms of contamination. **These often unrecognised hazards help to explain why activities that are perceived by those involved as harmless fun, can suddenly turn into a life threatening or fatal incident.**

At water temperatures of 15C and below, individuals may experience an involuntary, physiological response known as '[Cold Water Shock](#)' causing a sudden gasp and inhalation of water, immediately putting an individual in difficulty. Cold water also significantly impacts on one's ability to swim and self-rescue. Even strong swimmers can find their muscles weakening and abilities significantly diminished in cold water. The water temperature in many quarry lakes and reservoirs will often be significantly below 15C even during a long and hot summer. The temperature of the water also varies at different levels or areas within the body of water.

Raising your pupils awareness of some of these facts and simple measures that can be taken to keep themselves safer may help to avoid them, their friends and family being involved in a tragic accident.

If it would be of interest to you to have someone visit your school either from one of our member companies or another organisation with an interest in water safety such as the RNLI or RLSS, please either e-mail me at elizabeth.clements@mineralproducts.org or call 07775 894285. Similarly, if you would be interested in organising a quarry visit during the next academic year, please contact me.

Yours sincerely



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INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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Please see below a list of free resources that provide key messages on water safety produced by a number of different agencies.

- The RNLI and RLSS websites provide guidance on water safety and water rescue.
<https://www.respectthewater.com/>
- [‘Float to Live’](#) RNLI - YouTube video
- [‘One last Breath’](#) - Wales Water - YouTube video
- [‘Why quarry lakes are killers’](#) - MPA - Youtube video
- [RLSS Resources for schools](#)
- **YouTube** - [Stay Safe Stay Out of Quarries](#) - a short video summary giving key messages and clips of the friends and parents of teenagers who have died in quarry accidents. (this covers water related and other hazards - older audience)
- **Facebook** - [Stay Safe Stay Out of Quarries](#), the campaign page which includes recent examples of quarry related incidents and links to other resources and campaigns.
- For more information about the campaign or if you would like to arrange for a school or a supervised, educational quarry visit please contact Elizabeth Clements at elizabeth.clements@mineralproducts.org
- Information and a downloadable copy of the National Drowning Prevention Strategy at <http://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/strategy/>
- National Fire Chiefs Council Campaigns - ‘Be Water Aware’ - <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/22210>

Please support us in helping your students, colleagues and their families to “Respect the Water” and “Be Water Aware”. To help them appreciate that quarries, reservoirs and other similar industrial sites have hidden dangers, there are better places for adventurous activities. Warning signs are there to help protect.

Download an electronic version of this from www.mineralproducts.org/watersafetyengland.pdf

Free copies of MPA safety leaflets can be ordered from the MPA