

PLANNING TRIPS & PREVENTING DISASTERS



WATER INSIGHT, SAFETY & EDUCATION





When it comes to safety, the more planning you do, the safer you will be. It's easy to get information online so even if something seems safe, check it out. A small change in the weather can create unexpected dangers.

Here's what to think about when you plan:

1) HAZARDS:

Hazards can be visible (like waterfalls, cliffs, steep banks) or they can be hidden (like rocks or junk in the water). The golden rule is to avoid hazards if possible. Otherwise, do what you can to control them.

How to reduce, avoid and control hazards - example:

- You see a rock where you've planned to cliff jump. It'll be hard / impossible to move. Instead, change your location.
- If weather isn't suitable, wait for it to improve.

2) RISKS:

Hazards cause risks. So you should assess how much of a risk the hazard poses. For example, what's the risk of sliding into water on the slippery riverbank mentioned in the last point?

HOW TO ASSESS RISKS:

Identify possible hazards - and take your time! For example, ocean waves come in pulses. One moment, the sea is flat but two minutes later huge waves can be surging onto the shoreline. If you had rushed, you would be out among those waves.

Assess risk - does the activity have high or low risk of causing an accident? Consider all outcomes, good and bad. Assess the condition of your equipment and the safety of your surroundings.

HOW TO REDUCE AND ELIMINATE RISKS:

- Follow recommended safety procedures.
- Get adequate training.
- Make sure you can contact the emergency services - is there a phone signal?
- Check where the activity will take place – is it too remote?
- Ask other people about their experience.

3) ABILITIES:

Does everyone in your group have the ability needed to stay safe. For example, can everyone swim?

How to improve abilities:

Get training and instruction. Don't be fooled by something that looks easy. The person doing it probably has lots of training, experience and practice. So their ability outweighs the risk – yours might not.

REMEMBER:

When high risks meet low abilities, accidents happen. When you plan, aim for a situation where your abilities are greater than the risks you face.





**HAZARDS CAN BE VISIBLE
OR THEY CAN BE HIDDEN. BEWARE.**

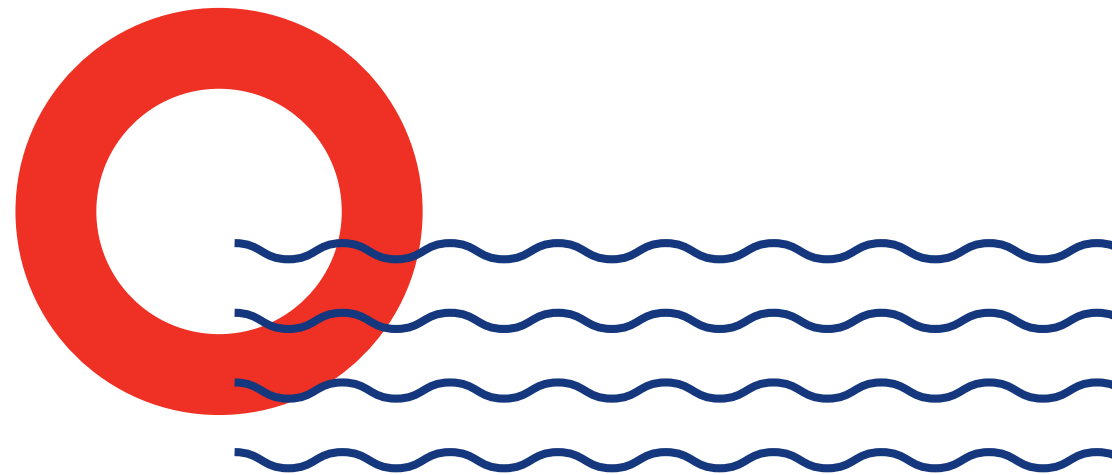


Check out these dramatic videos to see why awareness of hazards and risks is so important:

BIG WAVE SURF RESCUE

KAYAKER PINNED BY ROCKS ON RIVER

BIG WAVE RISK ASSESSMENT GROUP





- 1 THINK AHEAD AND PLAN - THE MORE YOU KNOW THE SAFER YOU'LL BE.**
- 2 IDENTIFY HAZARDS AND IF YOU HAVE THE SKILLS TO COPE WITH THEM.**
- 3 OVERCOME LACK OF SKILLS WITH TRAINING.**



ESSENTIAL LEARNING

PART ONE:

The weather was terrible in May but has now improved. So your parents are taking you and two friends to surf in Lahinch in Co Clare. When you arrive, you see big waves following the storm. You've checked the tide and know it's pushing onto the rocks soon. You've been to Clare a lot over the years. You've also taken some lessons and surfed in similar conditions - but never at high tide.

You are aware of today's hazards - especially having completed the WISE programme. On the other hand, your friends have zero experience and haven't checked anything. But they already have their wetsuits on and are ready to rock. You're having second thoughts.

WHAT DO YOU DO?...

1) Assess the risk. Ask questions like:

- Could the tide pull you out? Large waves might also mean there are rip currents (see Lesson 3).
- Are lifeguards on duty? Can you see red flags?
- Assess risk: is the chance of an accident high, medium or low?
- What's the worst thing that could happen?
- Could the emergency services be contacted and reach you easily?

2) Assess your abilities

- Can you and your friends cope with the water equally well?
- Do you both know hazards and risks?

3) Who decides whether it is safe to go surfing or not? Should your parents make the call – after all, they have more experience.

4) Is there a safer location for surfing than this beach?



PART TWO:

You finally convince your friends that it isn't safe to surf. You've explained that large waves also means there are rip currents and the tide is pushing our fast. On top of all that, you haven't much surfing experience – and they have none. Not too happy, your friends says "OK then, let's have a quick dip...".

- Do you need another risk assessment?
- Are the hazards the same?
- Is the risk still high?
- Should you agree to go for a dip or not?

PART THREE:

Flip everything. Now you're the less experienced person. You know your friend is more experienced but you really want to get into the water. You're pushy - but your friend is clearly saying neither surfing or swimming is safe. What do you do?

- Pressure your friend into going into the water?
Or accept it's dangerous (even if you can't see why)?
- Tell them you'll go in without them.
- Do you know enough to assess the risks and your abilities?

