What to do if you see someone in trouble

If you do see someone who is in difficulty in the water ensure the emergency services are contacted (999 or 112). Reassure them that help is coming. Keep them in your line of sight and, circumstances permitting, throw something buoyant to aid their safety until help arrives, without endangering yourself.

What about water sports and organised events like triathlons?

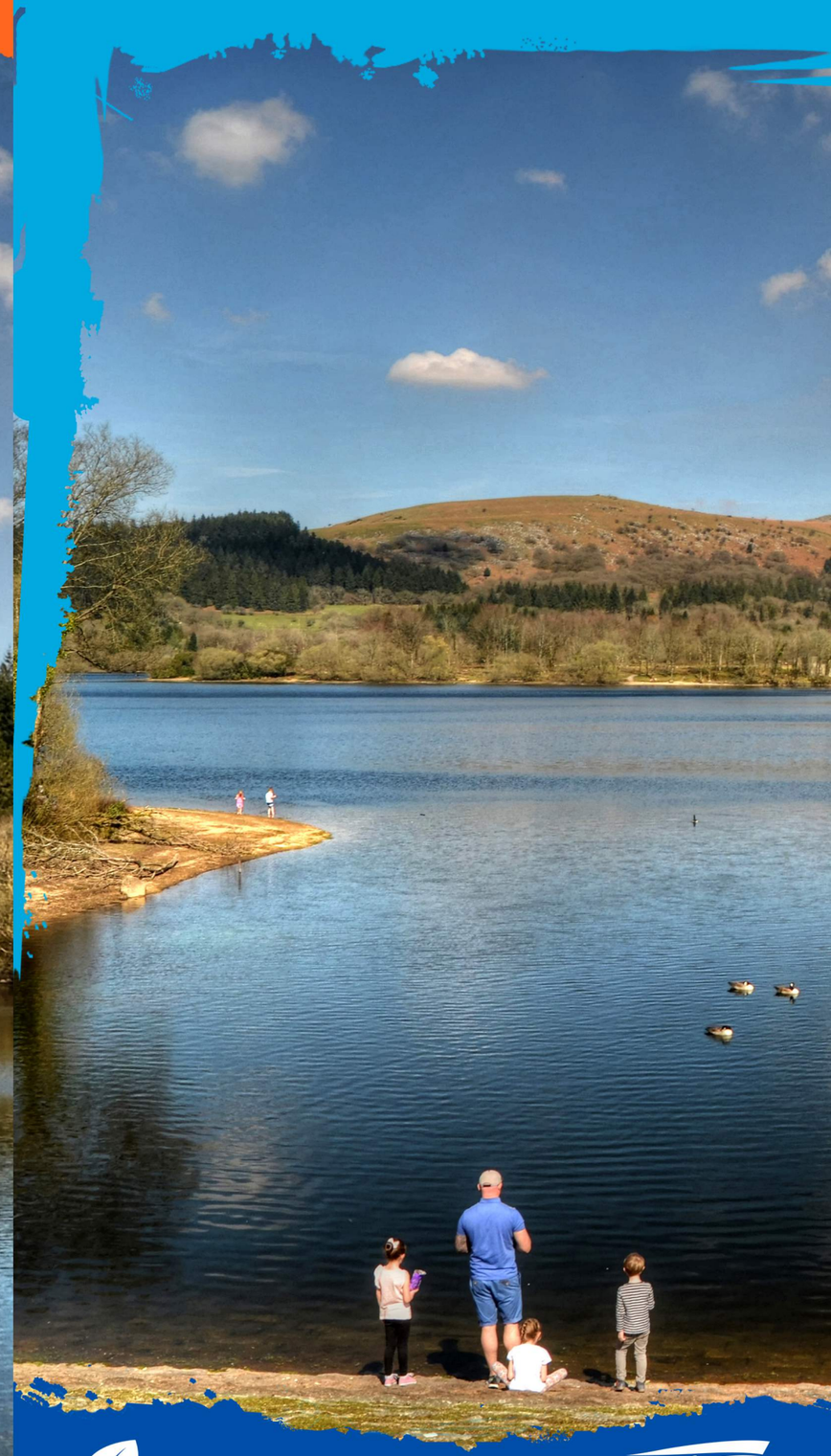
Triathlons are officially organised events, which are closely supervised and have appropriate safety measures in place. Swim competitors have completed open water swim training and are familiar with the hazards of cold water. All watersports participants in organised events use buoyancy aids or other floatation devices.

Contact us

Each year we receive reports of swimming, diving, abseiling and even tombstoning at our reservoirs. These activities are extremely dangerous and we would urge anyone who sees this sort of activity taking place to contact our 24-hour helpline on **0344 346 2020**.

swlakestrust RS_2018 Photo (and cover): Sue Rowlands South West Water

Reservoir Safety



swlakestrust South West Water

Enjoy the scenery safely

Reservoirs are beautiful – but can also be dangerous. Every summer, we remind people not to swim in our reservoirs because of the risks that can affect even the strongest swimmers.

Please remember that you are responsible for your own actions and safety in and around the water. Be aware of your surroundings, always keep to designated footpaths and comply with the warning signs on visitor noticeboards around our reservoirs.

Around **85%** of accidental drownings occur at open water sites[1]. Latest figures from the National Water Safety Forum show that **255 people** lost their lives to accidental drowning in the UK in 2017[2]. As in previous years, men (217), and particularly young men, are disproportionately represented in the statistics[3].

[1] https://rlss.org.uk/water-safety/water-safety/water-safety-in-open-water/
[2] https://nationalwatersafety.wordpress.com/
[3] https://nationalwatersafety.wordpress.com/

Photo: James Ram

Resist the urge: Stay safe, stay out

Reservoirs are deep, open expanses of water that can be tempting for swimming, especially in warm weather. However they are also operational sites with hidden machinery and concrete structures for water treatment working under the surface that can cause injury.

Underwater hazards include water intakes (suction pipes) that create strong, unpredictable currents affecting the ability to swim safely.

Other hidden dangers found at reservoirs include underwater plant life that can entangle swimmers and steep, slippery banks, making it difficult to climb out.

Reservoirs are often remote, secluded areas and have no lifeguarding facilities. Poor mobile phone coverage also hinders rescue attempts in the event of an emergency.

Photo: Brian Poole

Numb limbs claim lives: Cold water shock

Deep water in reservoirs means temperatures rarely rise above 12°C, even on a warm day. This is defined as cold water and can seriously affect your breathing and movement.

Cold water shock is a precursor to drowning. Temperatures are cold enough to stiffen muscles, inducing fatigue and making it impossible to stay afloat and swim to safety.

The shock of cold water causes uncontrollable change in breathing rates, contributing to a feeling of panic, and can lead to hyperventilation, depriving the brain of oxygen which affects co-ordination.

Cold water also causes heart rates to increase as blood pressure rises, making even the young and healthy vulnerable to heart attacks.

Photo: Julia Amies-Green