



## Marine Notice No. 09 of 2025

*Notice to all Masters, Owners and Users of Pleasure and Recreational Craft.*

### **The Safe Operation of Recreational Craft Think and Prepare – Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks**

The Department of Transport wishes to draw attention to the importance of risk assessment before a person goes out on the water in any type of recreational craft. This involves thinking about local conditions, hazards or risks that could cause you harm and taking action to reduce or remove those risks in the interest of ensuring that you have a safe trip.

Before you go on the water, the following key steps are recommended as part of conducting a risk assessment:

- Identify the hazards – consider what could cause you harm? This could include hazards relating to adverse weather or sea/water conditions and forecast.
- Assess the risks associated with the hazards to determine the likelihood of harm being caused to you or others.
- Decide on control measures and precautions and implement them – think about what you can do to remove or reduce the risk.
- Evaluate and review the action you have taken to confirm each hazard has either been eliminated or appropriately controlled and continue to monitor to confirm the effectiveness of the control measures in place.

**Remember**, it is important to remain aware of your situation on the water as conditions can change.

The Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft contains examples of hazards and associated risks that can be present, as well as possible measures to take to remove or reduce risks. A Think and Prepare table on the identification and assessment of hazards and risks is provided on pages 12-16 of the Code of Practice and is also attached at the Appendix to this Marine Notice. This includes risks associated with weather, visibility, cold water immersion, wind force, tides, not having a personal flotation device or a means of communication or appropriate training, engine failure and alcohol and drugs.

For further safety information, a copy of the Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft can be obtained free of charge on request, in both English and Irish, from the Maritime Safety Policy Division of the Department of Transport by email at [marineleisuresafety@transport.gov.ie](mailto:marineleisuresafety@transport.gov.ie)

The Code is also available to view or download from [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/66ff7e-safe-operation-of-recreational-craft/> and on [www.safetyonthewater.ie](http://www.safetyonthewater.ie). The Code of Practice can also be downloaded by using the QR code below:



Additional online publications in relation to safety on the water are available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/60fd1-all-safety-on-the-water-booklets/>

**All recreational craft users are encouraged to read the Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft and to follow the safety advice and guidance contained in the Code.**

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Department of Transport  
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.

25/02/2025

**Encl:** Appendix: Think and Prepare – Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks



## Think and Prepare

### Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks

#### What is a Hazard?

A Hazard is something that could cause harm to you or others.

#### What is a Risk?

A Risk is the likelihood of harm being caused if you are exposed to a Hazard.

**Risk Assessment – Think about what could go wrong or cause you harm and take action to reduce or remove the risk.**

Before you go out on the water, you need to think about any hazards or risks that exist that could cause you harm, both in the short term and potential risks that may arise in the medium to long term. Then you need to assess the hazards, decide are they significant or small, and take action to reduce or remove the risks associated with the hazards that you have identified. By taking action, you can create a safer experience on the water.

It is important to assess each recreational craft activity separately, since specific environments will present different challenges, hazards and risks.

It is recommended that before you go out on the water, you carry out a hazard identification/risk assessment based on the following basic steps.

- Identify the hazards – consider what could cause harm?
- Assess the risks associated with the hazards to determine the likelihood of harm being caused to you or others.
- Decide on the control measures and precautions and implement them.
- Evaluate and review the action you have taken to confirm each hazard has either been eliminated or appropriately controlled and continue to monitor to confirm the effectiveness of the control measures in place.



## Think and Prepare

### Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks



Identifying hazards will depend on the type of recreational craft activity you are taking part in. A common hazard for all users is adverse weather conditions or forecast. Weather plays a big role in safety on the water.

Being prepared before going on the water includes consideration of possible local hazards. Seek local information and knowledge and be prepared for the unexpected. Talk to local residents who know the waters, particularly those waters that are not covered by marine charts. They may be familiar with local wind conditions and currents.

Below is an example of a template that could be used to assist with conducting a risk assessment before you go out on the water:

<b>Hazard Identification</b> - what is the Hazard that could cause harm?	<b>Risk associated with Hazard</b> - What could happen if I don't think and prepare? [Assess potential consequences and likelihood of incident occurring, i.e. level of risk (Low, Medium, High. Probable or improbable?). Who could be at risk and how?]	<b>Control Measure</b> - What am I doing to remove/reduce the Risk?	<b>Review/ Evaluate your Control Measures</b>



## Think and Prepare

### Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks

Hazard	Risk	Control Measure	Review/Evaluate your Control Measure
Falling Overboard - Cold water immersion.	Unable to re-board the craft Hypothermia	Never go out alone. Wear a suitable PFD and ensure it fits correctly. Wear appropriate clothing. Have a safe means of re-boarding your craft.	Maintain PFD's before and after every use. Visually check your PFD before your trip. Maintain wetsuits.

It is important to remain aware of your situation on the water.

Assess the hazards and risks *before* leaving shore but continue to be aware *during* your trip as the conditions can change.

There are many types of hazards and associated risks and these can vary depending on a range of factors that present themselves both before and during a trip. The following Table lists some possible hazards. The list is not exhaustive but is presented to provoke and encourage thought before a trip is commenced and during a trip.

Possible Hazard	Risk associated with the Hazard	Control Measure/Mitigation
Weather conditions/ Adverse weather forecast.	Dangerous sea/water conditions. Capsize. Falling into cold water/ drowning. Unable to return home. Blown out to sea/off course. Hypothermia.	Ask the Question - Is it safe to go out? Do not go out in adverse weather conditions or where adverse weather is forecast. Training. Wear PFD. Wear suitable clothing. Know how to use equipment. Never go out alone. Dependable means of communication.



## Think and Prepare

### Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks

Possible Hazard	Risk associated with the Hazard	Control Measure/Mitigation
Cold weather/ water	Hypothermia. Lack of protective clothing.	Training. Wear PFD. Wear suitable clothing. Dependable means of communication.
Hot sunny weather	Hyperthermia (sunstroke).	Wear suitable clothing. Sunscreen. Wear a hat.
Strong winds Dangerous sea conditions/strong currents	Capsize/falling into cold water/drowning. Hypothermia/cold water shock. Blown out to sea/off course.	Ask the Question – Is it safe to go out? Wear a PFD. Training. Know Capsize Drill. Know Man Overboard rescue procedures. Means to re-board a craft such as a boarding ladder. Dependable means of communication.
Poor visibility/ fog/very heavy rain/darkness	Inability to find way back. Collision with rocks, other fixed objects, river bank, other craft.	Do not go out. Training. Know lights and sound signals used by vessels. Dependable means of communication.



## Think and Prepare

### Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks

Possible Hazard	Risk associated with the Hazard	Control Measure/Mitigation
No voyage plan. No contingency plan if things go wrong. No means of communication.	No plan to deal with an emergency situation. Unable to contact anyone to raise the alarm. No one knows where you are or where you are going.	Plan your voyage and have a back-up plan if you need to change. Tell someone ashore what your plans are, where you are going and your expected departure/arrival times. Log a Traffic Report Message with the IRCG. Have a dependable means of communication. Wear a PFD.
Falling into the water without a PFD/Lifejacket.	Drowning. Cold Water Shock. Hypothermia.	Wear a PFD/Lifejacket at all times. Know how to float without a PFD/Lifejacket. Learn Float to Live techniques. Never go out alone.
Engine failure/ fire. Damaged boat. Injury.	Float away. Blown off course. Need to abandon ship.	Emergency Action Plan. Designated person ashore. Know how to raise the alarm. Dependable means of communication. Know how to use equipment. Carry appropriate spare parts for your boat's engine and know how to fix it in an emergency. Carry appropriate equipment to rig a tow and know how to prepare your boat. First Aid Kit.



## Think and Prepare

### Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks

Possible Hazard	Risk associated with the Hazard	Control Measure/Mitigation
Lack of Knowledge of Local Hazards, e.g. rough water, fast flowing water, areas of shallow water, flooded river, debris in the water	Dangerous sea/water conditions. Unknown obstacles/dangers.	Plan your voyage.
Tides	Fast flowing tide. Being swept out to sea.	Check tide times. Avoid having to return against a fast-flowing tide. Carry enough fuel for your journey plus some reserve.
Lack of Training. Unqualified coaches/persons Age and level of experience of those on board. Lack of Knowledge re. how to use equipment such as VHF radio, rescue equipment.	Lack of Knowledge regarding what to do in an emergency.	Get appropriate training from an approved training provider.



## Think and Prepare

### Identify and Assess Hazards and Risks

Possible Hazard	Risk associated with the Hazard	Control Measure/Mitigation
Alcohol/Drugs	Lack of control of the craft. Impaired judgement and decision-making. Loss of coordination. Decreased awareness of the environment around you. Inability to focus. Drowsiness. Danger to other craft and crew.	Never consume alcohol or drugs before or during a trip on the water.