

Reservoir safety. Keep safe. Keep out.

Educate teenagers about the hazards of reservoir swimming

INSIDE THIS PACK

> Facts and figures about reservoirs

> Videos & related activities

> Drama activities

> Writing & art activities

About this resource

Stay alert, save lives

As teenagers prepare to enjoy their first restriction-free summer in two years, United Utilities is reminding young thrill-seekers of the dangers of reservoirs.

Every year when the warmer weather arrives, many people – particularly younger age groups – are tempted to head to our inland waters, lakes, quarries and reservoirs to meet up with friends and cool down with a swim. It's a dangerous trend which, as this pack will go on to show, can have tragic consequences.

Owning more than 150 reservoirs across the North West, we at United Utilities are always committed to raising awareness of this issue and to explaining why swimming in them is so dangerous.

This pack has been designed for you to work through with teenage students to help them understand the real dangers of swimming in reservoirs. It includes fun written exercises, video and discussion activities, and also suggestions for drama sessions – all of which will hopefully help your students engage with this important topic. Let's go!



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Teachers, here's how to use this pack

This pack contains a series of engaging and interactive activities designed for teenagers to help them understand why swimming in reservoirs is so dangerous, and to help re-enforce crucial STAY SAFE messaging.

Before we get to that though, here is a full breakdown of what the pack contains and also some tips on ways you might like to get involved and help your students get as much as possible out of this resource.

Activity No.1 (page 4) Facts and figures about reservoirs Find the answers!

Format: Printable worksheet for students to complete.

Tip: Encourage your students to search for the answers online. Some good websites to look at are: www.unitedutilities.com/about-us/recreation-sites/reservoir-safety

<https://www.rlss.org.uk/drowning-prevention-week>

The answers are included at the end of the pack (page 9).

Activity No.2 (pages 5 & 6) Two powerful films to watch

Format: Videos and discussion.

Watch this duo of short films with your students. The first is the dramatisation of the real-life story of a teenager from the North West who drowned in a reservoir. The second is a doctor's explanation of cold-water shock.

Tip: After watching the films, we've provided some discussion and learning points that might help you get students talking about what they've seen. This might work best in smaller groups.

Activity No.3 (page 7) Drama

Format: Small group/whole class performances.

Use the reservoir facts and films as the basis for drama sessions.

Tip: We've suggested some activities that might work better as pairs and other as whole class, but the activities are very flexible. Your students may have their own ideas too.

Activity No.4 (page 8) Writing and art

Format: Individual and group activities.

Encourage your students to tackle this topic through writing and design.

Tip: The design suggestions could work well as a competition with the winning design copied and posted up around school. Or if you take pictures and share with us via UUCommsTeam@uuplc.co.uk, we'll share on social media namechecking your school.

That's it! We hope this is a useful resource for your class but most importantly, that it is also an engaging way for your teenagers to learn about this crucial subject in a sensitive but also creative way.

The full activity pack now follows...



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Activity No.1

Why is swimming in reservoirs dangerous?

Firstly, let's test your knowledge on reservoirs. To the right of this page are some statements and key facts about reservoirs, but there are gaps in the statement. Use the internet to try and fill out as many of the gaps as possible. Answers are at the end of this pack – no peeking until you have completed this.

United Utilities has over ___ reservoirs across the North West, the biggest is Haweswater in the Lake District which holds 84,839,000 litres of water – that's the equivalent of _____ cups of tea.

The water in a reservoir never really gets above ___°C even on the hottest of days. Jumping into a reservoir can cause cold water shock which can kill even the fittest of people within ___ seconds.

Reservoirs contain machinery that can be _____ and _____.

The number of lifeguards on duty at reservoirs is _____ as swimming is strictly prohibited, meaning it could be too late by the time help arrives.

Over ___ people drown in the UK and Ireland every year and many more suffer injuries, some life-changing, through non-fatal drowning experiences.

You are more likely to die from drowning than by being hit by a _____ or in a fire.

Activity No.2

'60 seconds of Summer' video

This hard-hitting play was written and performed to educate young people about the dangers of swimming unaided in open water and reservoirs.

United Utilities worked with Dylan Ramsay's family to show how even the strongest swimmers can drown as a result of cold water shock and learn how Dylan's loss affected those around him.

Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgzlb3ewUTU>



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Discussion topics:

1. Dylan went into the water because Caden talked him into it. What else made him want to go into the water?

Example prompts:

- A false sense of security – he boasted he was a good swimmer
- He wanted to share it on social media
- He wanted to show off

2. Were Lucy and Caden right not to get into the water to try and help Dylan?

Example prompts:

- Yes. He was panicking and could have dragged them under with him.
- Yes. They wouldn't have been strong enough to drag him to safety and may have ended up in trouble, too.

3. Given he was a strong swimmer, why did Dylan get into difficulty so quickly?

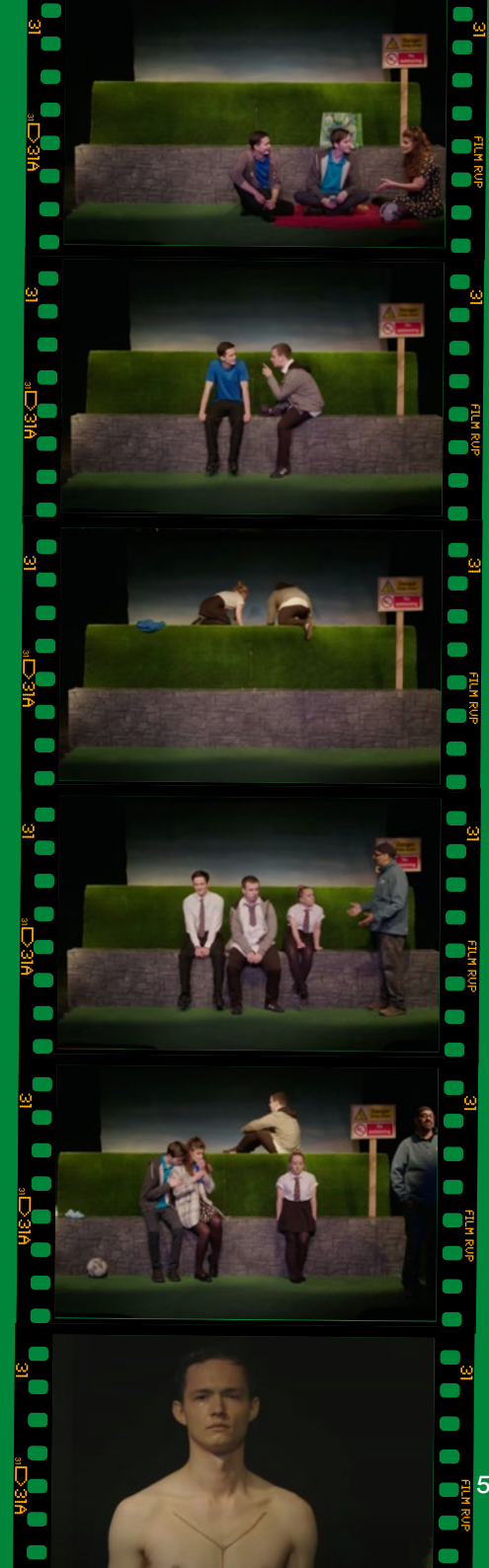
Example prompts:

- The icy coldness of the water put his body into shock, so that it couldn't function properly.
- It caused cramps, breathing difficulties, heart problems and panic.

4. What should you do in a water safety emergency?

Example prompts:

- Adopt a new motto – NO LIFEGUARD NO SWIMMING
- NEVER GO INTO THE WATER YOURSELF – CALL FOR HELP IMMEDIATELY!
- If you have a mobile phone, dial 999. If not, shout for help as loudly as you can, or run to find someone who can call the emergency rescue services for you.



'A cold that can kill' video

Straight-talking GP and TV medical expert, Dr Sarah Jarvis, explains why jumping or diving into a reservoir, or other open water source like a river or a canal, pond, lake or quarry could quite literally be the last thing you do.

Dr Sarah talks about the immediate and major life-threatening effects that cold water has on your body, and how it affects your ability to get yourself out of danger.

Watch here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGVT7Ong4xo>



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Learning points:

- Don't assume that reservoirs and lakes are safe places to swim. It takes just seconds for someone – even the fittest people and the strongest swimmers – to get into trouble in open water. And it takes only minutes for that person to drown.
- The initial shock of diving or jumping into cold water can affect some people in water temperatures as high as 77°F (25°C). And in fact, nobody – not even the fittest and strongest – is immune to the dangers if the temperatures are below 60°F (15°C).

Discussion topics:

What do you remember most about Dr Sarah's descriptions of what happens to your body when you jump straight into very cold water? Can you imagine what it feels like:

- when the shock of hitting the water suddenly 'takes your breath away'?
- to 'hyperventilate' (over-breathe)?
- to be unable to reach out for help because your muscles are so un-coordinated?
- to have a heart attack in the water because your vital organs can't cope?

Does it surprise you to hear how quickly your body starts to struggle and what happens to it when you dive or jump into cold water?

- Even on a warm day, the deep water in reservoirs remains very cold, sending the human body into shock within seconds.
- It doesn't mean you're out of danger even if you don't run into problems in the first few minutes after getting into the water.
- As your body cools down, the muscles in your arms and legs don't work effectively – even strong swimmers may find they can't stay afloat or get out of the water.

As well as the 'body shock' effects of hypothermia and drowning, what other hidden dangers can be found in open water sources such as reservoirs, ponds, lakes, quarries and rivers and canals?

- **Disease:** water is untreated, leaving swimmers vulnerable to illness from, for example, lead poisoning, infections, allergies, parasites and bacteria.
- **Injury:** From underwater hazards, such as dead animals, active machinery for water treatment, sharp-edged objects such as debris or rocks.

Activity No.3

Drama activities

These suggestions may help reinforce the serious messages around reservoir safety by encouraging students to think originally and positively about what they've learned from the films and subsequent discussions.

Your students may feel confident enough to share what they've learned with fellow students. Any of the above reservoir safety scenarios could also be performed as an educational 'grand finale' at an end-of-term assembly.



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Ask students to pair up and:

- Recreate the parts of Dylan, Caden and Lucy – as if Dylan was talking to them after he had drowned. What would he say?
- One can play the part of an emergency services operator, while another is a distressed caller whose friend/brother/sister is struggling in the water. How would the operator calm the caller to get the information he/she needed to send help?



Or as a whole group:

- Set up an imaginary TV studio and create a short news bulletin about the dangers of swimming in open water. The newsreader will be armed with the facts and figures, while interviews could feature, for example, a reservoir manager, members of a family that have arrived for a picnic at the local reservoir and a rescue team member.



Activity No.4

Writing and art exercises

You could ask students to:

- Create a 400-word story about a boy/girl who was lucky enough to survive after being pulled from a reservoir by rescue services. Tell the story through the survivor's own eyes.
- Write a script for a 30-second TV advert on reservoir safety. Get students to time their work, and then read it to their classmates.
- Design a reservoir safety poster that can be used around school and other community buildings.
- Design an award, medal or certificate that could be presented by United Utilities or local rescue services to reward schools, community groups or individuals that excel in raising awareness of reservoir safety issues.



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The knowledge

If you had a crack at the brain teaser in activity No.1, then here are the answers...



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United Utilities has over **150** reservoirs across the North West, the biggest is Haweswater in the Lake District which holds 84,839,000 litres of water – that's the equivalent of **350 million** cups of tea.

The water in a reservoir never really gets above **11°C** even on the hottest of days. Jumping into a reservoir can cause cold water shock which can kill even the fittest of people within **60** seconds.

Reservoirs contain machinery that can be **hidden** and **dangerous**.

The number of lifeguards on duty at reservoirs is **0** as swimming is strictly prohibited, meaning it could be too late by the time help arrives.

Over **700** people drown in the UK and Ireland every year and many more suffer injuries, some life-changing, through non-fatal drowning experiences.

You are more likely to die from drowning than by being hit by a **car** or in a fire.



Thanks for reading,
and remember the motto –
Keep safe. Keep out.

FURTHER READING

[unitedutilities.com/
about-us/recreation-sites/
reservoir-safety](https://unitedutilities.com/about-us/recreation-sites/reservoir-safety)



Water for the North West