



# Water Safety Signage Guidance – Wales

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# Introduction

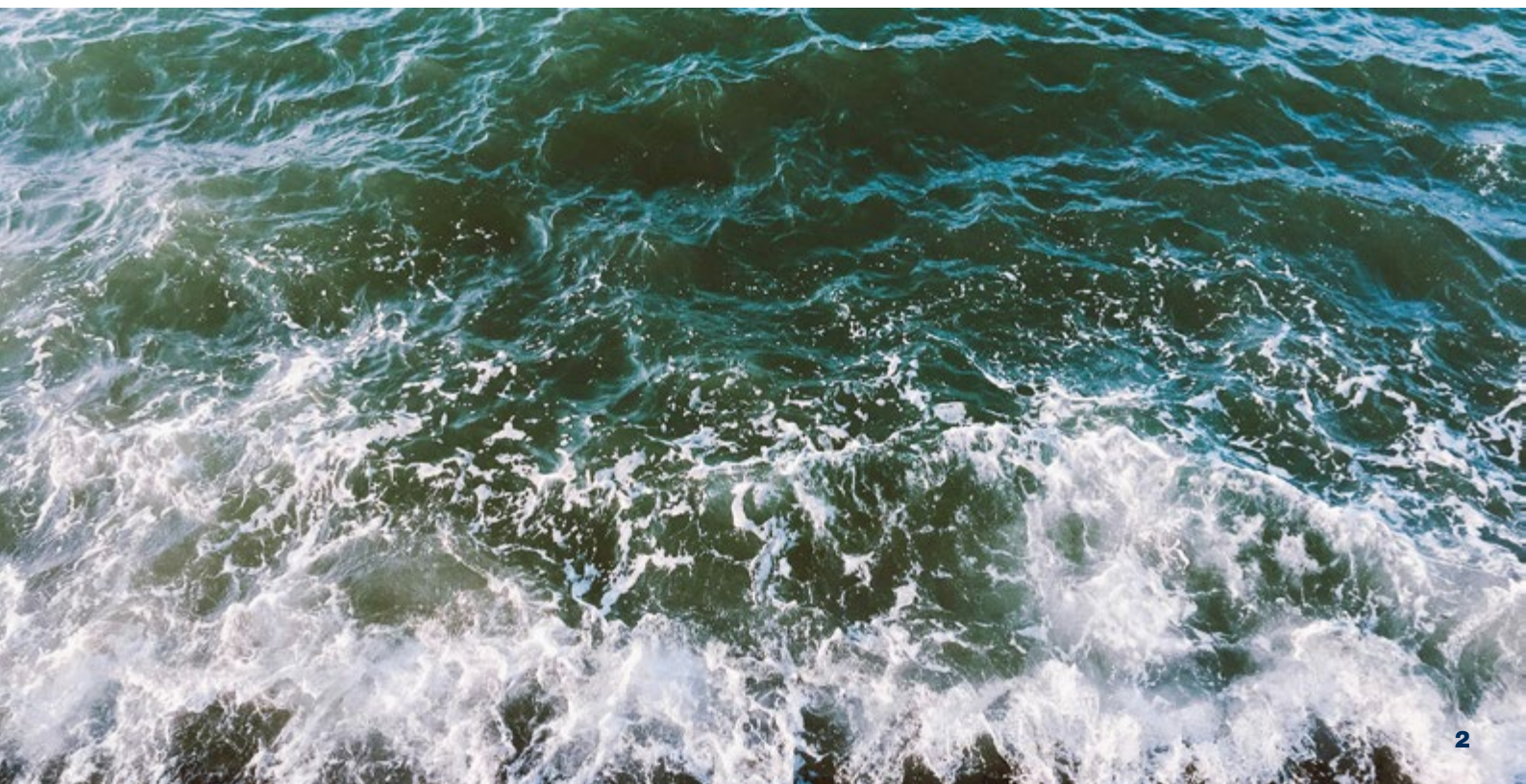
On average, there are 51 water-related fatalities every year in Wales. 25 of these are accidental meaning that the average accidental fatality rate in Wales is 0.81 per 100,000 population. This rate is higher than the UK average.<sup>1</sup> Water Safety Wales (WSW) works to prevent water-related fatalities through the implementation of Wales' Drowning Prevention Strategy<sup>2</sup> (WDPS) and to respond to the recommendations made by Welsh Parliament in Mark Allen's Law.<sup>3</sup>

This guidance document has been written with one key objective: to provide a step-by-step guide for landowners and managers to create consistent and easy to understand water safety signage.

A preceding project to ascertain landowner needs for water safety signs as well as the public's understanding of water safety signage was completed in 2025.<sup>4</sup> This document brings together the findings of that project into a guidance document.

**Please note that this is a guidance document only.** Organisations may create and utilise their own water safety signage should they wish. This could, however, result in inconsistencies across Wales and undermine the benefits of one national water safety signage format.

Whilst using this guidance document, we also recommend use of ISO 7010 – Graphical symbols – Safety colours and safety signs – Registered safety signs.



## Background

WSW works to prevent water-related fatalities through the implementation of WDPS with the following vision:

“*To reducing drowning deaths and keeping our communities safe around water.  
We have an aspiration of zero water-related deaths.*”

Water safety signage contributes to one of WDPS's seven key target aims to:

“*Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure consistent  
messages reach the right people at the right time.*”

Water safety signage also features in the Welsh Parliament Petitions Committee's Mark Allen's Law with Recommendation 4 directly addressing signage:

“*The Welsh Government should take steps to ensure that there is clarity about the minimum safety information and signage required around water bodies to increase awareness of the risks present to those who enter the water. Good quality and visible information has been cited as essential, whilst there was concern about the lack of such information at key locations. This is one of a range of control measures identified as part of thorough risk assessments of water bodies.*”

Whilst no formal report was commissioned, it is commonly accepted that landowners in Wales have different approaches to water safety signage leading to inconsistencies across the country. A report conducted in Scotland in 2022, with a similar context to Wales, supports this.<sup>5</sup> This also led to Water Safety Scotland (WSS) studying public perceptions and understandings of signage publishing findings in early 2024<sup>6</sup> along with a guidance document published in the same year.<sup>7</sup>

To help improve inconsistencies in Wales, and support both WDPS and recommendation of Mark Allens Law<sup>4</sup>, WSW and The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) as part of their funded work, replicated the Scottish project to:

- gain consensus on what water safety signage in Wales should look like and what information it should include
- test the agreed water safety signage with members of the public to ascertain their understanding of the signs and their awareness of specific aspects of the sign.

The research report detailing the results of this project was released in 2025<sup>4</sup> and demonstrated expert consensus on several aspects and necessary components of proposed water safety signs for Wales. Additionally, the results of the research showed that the proposed new signage is clear and understandable to members of the public. Participants demonstrated a high level of understanding of the component parts of the sign such as hazard identification and what to do in an emergency.

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## Benefits of consistent water safety signage

Having one consistent format of water safety signage across Wales could have the following benefits:

- an easy followed image that allows the public to understand hazards and what to do in an emergency
- the public will be aware of and able to understand the signs anywhere in Wales.

Additionally, signage produced under this guidance will have similarities with Scotland improving consistency across the UK. This may be beneficial for both locals and tourists.

## Using this guidance

This is a guidance document only – areas may create and utilise their own water safety signage should they wish, however, please note that this could result in inconsistencies across areas and undermine the benefits of a national water safety signage format.

Whilst using this document, we also recommend use of ISO 7010 – Graphical symbols — Safety colours and safety signs — Registered safety signs.

## Types of signage

There are two types of signage recommended:

- a core water safety sign
- Public Rescue Equipment (PRE) signs

A core water safety sign is the suggested asset for use for any water safety sign.  
A PRE sign is a specific sign that should be used for PRE only.



## Core water safety sign

This section details the components of the Core water safety sign. Examples can be found below for both Inland and Coastal signs.

### Inland



### Coastal



The sign should be structured into different component parts: hazard identification, mandatory information, and emergency information.





### Mandatory information

Mandatory information provides actions and rules that must be adhered to. This may be, for example, 'Children must be supervised at all times'. Mandatory information should be blue.

### Hazard identification

Hazard identification should always be yellow and follow the icons presented in ISO 7010. The yellow icon should also have the words alongside e.g. 'BEWARE – COLD WATER'

### Emergency information

Emergency information tells the member of the public who to contact in the case of an emergency and how to do so. This information should be green on the sign.

The sign should state "In an emergency, call 999, ask for [agency] and quote"

The Coordinating Agency that should be noted is as follows:

Fire and Rescue Service - For inland locations

Coastguard – For all coastal locations

It is also possible to simply state "In an emergency, call 999 and quote"

Signs should have two location codes: a location name and an OS Grid reference.

### Prohibition icons

Red prohibition symbols (as detailed in ISO 7010) can also be used where required.





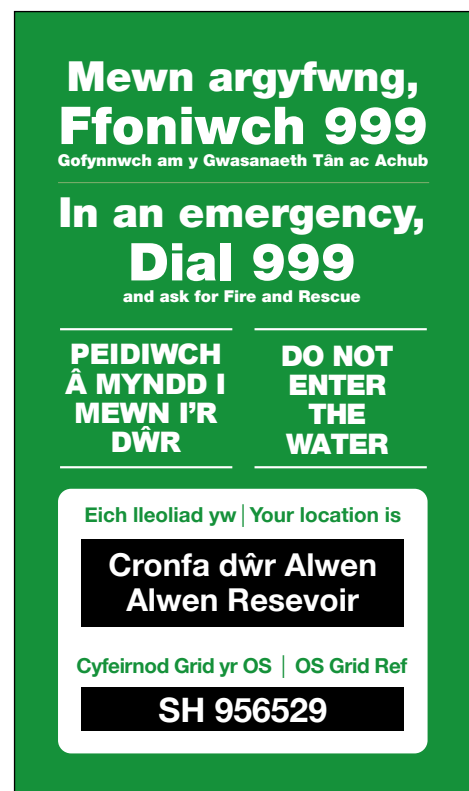
### Other information

A QR code to WSW's Water Safety Code is also recommended. This should be created in such a way as to not distort the key advice and warning signs.

No other additional information is suggested in order to ensure the sign is clear and straightforward.

## PRE Sign

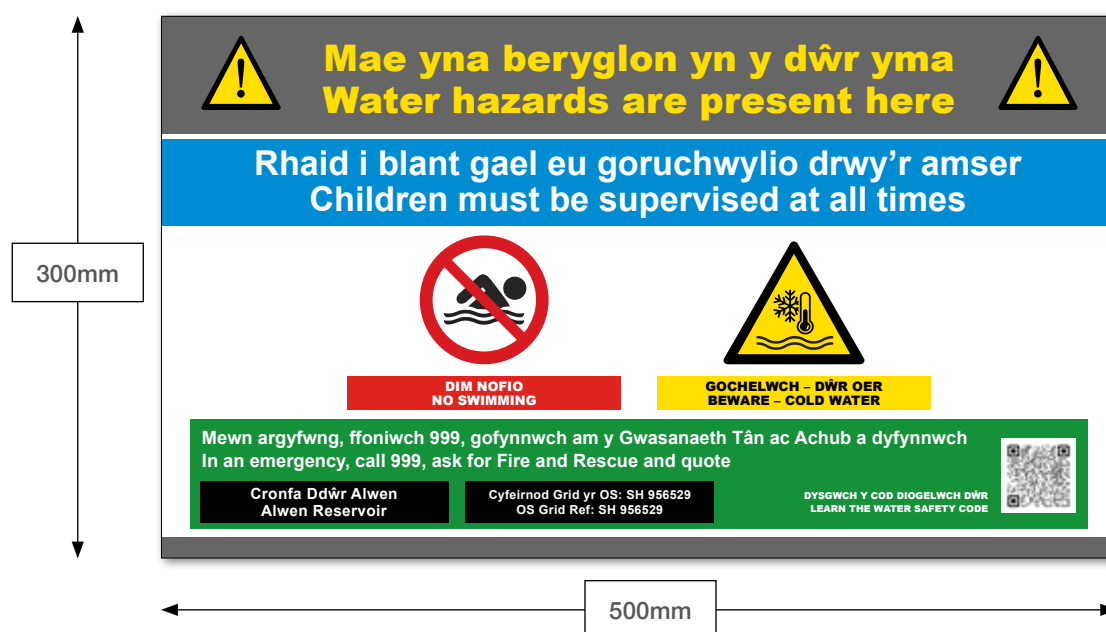
A specific sign can be used on PRE stations and equipment and should follow the same structure as the emergency information in a core water safety sign e.g. a green sign with clear instructions and a location name and OS Grid Reference.



## Sizing and fonts

The following font is recommended: Helvetica

Core water safety sign: it is recommended that the core water safety sign should be no smaller than 500mm x 300mm and is printed in landscape orientation.



## Welsh Language Measure

Compliance with the Welsh Language Measure for signage requires that:

- Welsh language text is not treated less favourably than English language text
- Welsh language must be positioned so that it is likely to be read first
- Welsh language text must be accurate in terms of meaning and expression.

Consideration to this should be made when designing signs.

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*any text displayed on the sign or notice must be displayed in Welsh (whether on the same sign or notice as you display corresponding English language text or on a separate sign or notice); and if the same text is displayed in Welsh and in English, you must not treat the Welsh language text less favourably than the English language text.<sup>8</sup>*

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## Conclusion

WSW advocates a consistent standard of signage to improve public awareness of water risks as well as to provide clear instructions on what to do in an emergency.

This combination of preventative messaging and safe actions to take in an emergency has the potential to improve public safety in and around Wales' waters. This supports the aims of WDPS and Mark Allen's Law.

## References

- 1 National Water Safety Forum, 2025. *WAID 2024 Summary for Water Safety Wales* [online]. Available from: [waid-wales-2024-summary-may25-final.pdf](#) [viewed 5 June 2025]
- 2 Water Safety Wales, 2024. *Mid-Strategy Review Wales' Drowning Prevention Strategy 2024-2026* [online]. Available from: [nationalwatersafety.org.uk/media/1430/wsw-mid-strategy-review-wdps-2020-2026-v3.pdf](#) [viewed 5 June 2025]
- 3 Welsh Parliament Petitions Committee, 2022. *Mark Allen's Law: Water Safety and Drowning Prevention* [online]. Available from: [senedd.wales/media/cn4fcehy/cr-ld15291-e.pdf](#) [viewed 5 June 2025]
- 4 Water Safety Wales, 2025. *Water Safety Wales Signage Report* [online]. Available from: [nationalwatersafety.org.uk/media/1455/water-safety-wales-signage-report.pdf](#) [viewed 13 August 2025]
- 5 Water Safety Scotland, 2022. *Water Safety Signage: Audit Report* [online]. Available from: [watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/2157/water-safety-signage-audit-report.pdf](#) [viewed 5 June 2025]
- 6 Water Safety Scotland, 2024. *Water Safety Signage: Research Report* [online]. Available from: [watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/m2dp1x4j/water-safety-signage-research-report.pdf](#) [viewed 22 April 2024]
- 7 Water Safety Scotland, 2024. *Water Safety Signage Guidance* [online]. Available from: [watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/boidmjwm/water-safety-signage-guidance.pdf](#) [viewed 22 April 2024]
- 8 Welsh Statutory Instruments, 2018. *The Welsh Language Standards (No. 7) Regulations 2018* [online]. Available from: [legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2018/441](#) [viewed 5 June 2025]

