

9. Prevention Before Rescue



Introduction

Anyone can get lost and it's easy to do. It's even easier for vulnerable groups such as the very young or those living with dementia. KSAR works with the community to raise awareness of ways to reduce the likelihood of family members or loved ones getting lost and of steps that can be taken now to assist in the search for those who may go missing, helping provide peace of mind.

Activities

Ages 10 ½ - 14 ½ years (e.g. Scouts and Guides)

- Complete Four of the following:
 - Learn about **KSAR Safe and Sound Campaign** and discuss how this could be of use in your area and group.
 - Learn about safety tips for youngsters such as the **Hug-A-Tree and Survive programme** which originated in the USA and discuss which tips from this could be used in your area and what other suggestions you have that are relevant to your group and area. Check to see if any UK SAR Teams have similar tips.
 - Design a poster about either the **Safe and Sound, or Hug-A-Tree type programmes**.
 - Discuss how the information on the **KSAR Safe and Sound campaign's "At Risk Of Going Missing"** form helps Police and search teams find someone who has gone missing. Is there anything you would add?
 - Describe the **Hug-a-Tree and Survive programme** to the leaders of your younger sections such as the Beavers, Rainbows, Cubs or Brownies and discuss with them which parts are relevant to their group and area



From Hill to High Water™



Ages 14 ½ years + (e.g. Senior Section, Explorers and Network)

- Complete Four of the following:
 - Learn about **KSAR Safe and Sound Campaign** and discuss how this could be of use in your area and group.
 - Learn about safety tips for youngsters such as the **Hug-A-Tree and Survive programme** which originated in the USA and discuss which tips from this could be used in

your area and what other suggestions you have that are relevant to your group and area. Check to see if any UK SAR Teams have similar tips.

- Discuss how the information on the **KSAR Safe and Sound Campaign's "At Risk of Going Missing"** form helps Police and search teams find someone who has gone missing. Is there anything you would add?
- Describe the **Hug-a-Tree and Survive programme** to the leaders of your younger sections such as the Beavers, Rainbows, Cubs or Brownies and discuss with them which parts are relevant to their group and area
- Learn about **KSAR #Safe and Dry campaign – *Be aware that this covers aspects pertaining to death by drowning. Caution should be exercised involving anyone who has lost a family member, loved one or friend by drowning or any kind of traumatic incident***

Equipment

The notes and links below. Paper and coloured pencils/pens if doing posters. Copies of the KSAR life history questionnaires.

Further information

KSAR Safe and Sound Campaign

Kent Search and Rescue's 'Safe and Sound' campaign is aimed primarily at those that care for vulnerable people of all ages, in particular carers who care for friends and family at home, parents, foster parents, and those who work with vulnerable people in various residential settings. Safe and Sound brings together a number of initiatives that are designed to help carers develop workable solutions to prevent the person they care for from going missing but also get them home quickly if they do. These proactive initiatives are each intended to alleviate as much of the stress associated with this type of event as possible.

The link below takes you to the KSAR Safe and Sound page where the "**At Risk of Going Missing**" form, pamphlets and newsletter are available to download:

<https://www.ksar.co.uk/community/safe-and-sound>

The History of Hug-a-Tree and Survive

In February 1981, 9 year old Jimmy Beveridge became lost during a family camping trip in Palomar State Park, California, USA. The search for Jimmy was the largest in the history of San Diego County. After four days, Jimmy's body was found approximately two miles from the campsite. He had died from hypothermia.

Many people were affected by this tragedy and had a desire to prevent similar events occurring again. This was the beginning of the Hug-a-Tree and Survive program in the USA. The programme was

designed to tell a simple story that would teach children how to avoid getting lost, how to stay comfortable if they get lost, and how to be spotted and found. In order to understand the full history and background to this program we urge you to follow this link to an article by West Valley Search and Rescue, San Bernardino County, California, USA: <http://www.westvalleysar.org/hugatreehistory.html>.

Get Found

Get Found is an initiative of Dorset Search and Rescue which gives simple advice on how to get found if you get lost: <http://www.dorsar.org.uk/initiatives/get-found.html>

A similar program is also run in other countries and the link below is to a related site in Canada. <http://www.calsara.com/interactive.html>. An internet search may find other examples.

KSAR #Safe and Dry Campaign

Sadly, and all too often, high-risk missing persons, who are found deceased, are discovered in rivers, lakes, canals and even ponds. There are various reasons why this happens, but one reason is more common than others. What do you think this is?

Searching large areas of water can be difficult and very protracted, involving all of the emergency and search and rescue services for long periods of time, sometimes weeks! Although the team hope that it will be otherwise, the outcome is, by and large, not a happy one.

Of those people found deceased in water, do you think that there are roughly equal numbers of males and females, a wide range of ages, etc, or a tendency for such victims to have much more in common? Is this type of tragic incident more common at some times of the year than others? What's your guess?

Researchers found that men who went missing after a "night out", and who were subsequently found deceased, were most often found in water, and, again, most often with alcohol and/or drugs in their system. Why is this; we can never know for sure, but intoxication can make people do silly things, and make poor decisions, such as walking home alone alongside a river or canal and stumbling in, being overcome by cold water shock and drowning, or going close to water (in order to urinate) and, once again stumbling in. In hot weather, it is not uncommon for intoxicated people to go for an impromptu swim and then get into difficulties. It is also not uncommon for sober people, such as runners and anglers to accidentally slip into water and drown. Sadly, the KSAR team, has, over the years, been involved in a significant number of water searches, some of which have dominated local newspaper headlines for days, and sometimes for weeks.

Sometimes, as human beings, our greatest achievements have come about when we have been inspired by others. There are a number of campaigns in the UK, which highlight the risk of drowning, and some, specifically, drowning after drinking alcohol (or taking drugs).

So why another similar campaign? Why start the KSAR #SAFE_AND_DRY CAMPAIGN? KSAR has an obligation, as one of its aims as a charity, to educate, and this is far easier, if it is by means of a campaign which is your own to tailor, direct, and be passionate about.

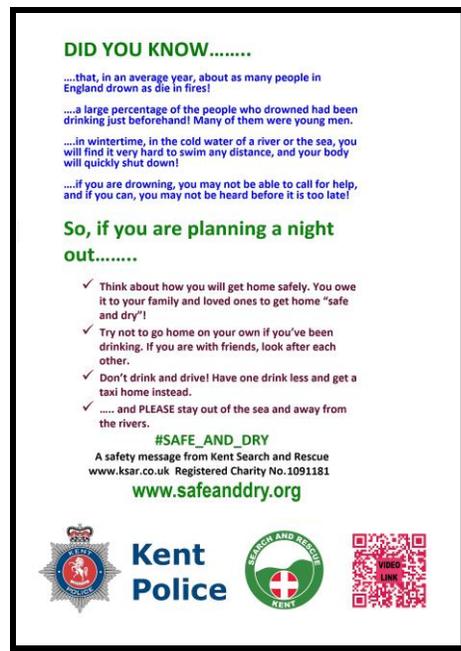
KSAR supports the UK's other water safety campaigns and cooperates with their organisers, as often as the opportunity presents.

So what makes KSAR #SAFE_AND_DRY different from other similar campaigns in the UK? Do you know the expression "Hope for the best and plan for the worst". That's the core logic at the heart of KSAR #SAFE_AND_DRY ! The primary aim....to make people planning to go on a night out, recognise how they might be at the end of the night, and plan in advance how they would get home safely. So, not an "anti-drinking" campaign.....more a "think ahead and get home safely" campaign!

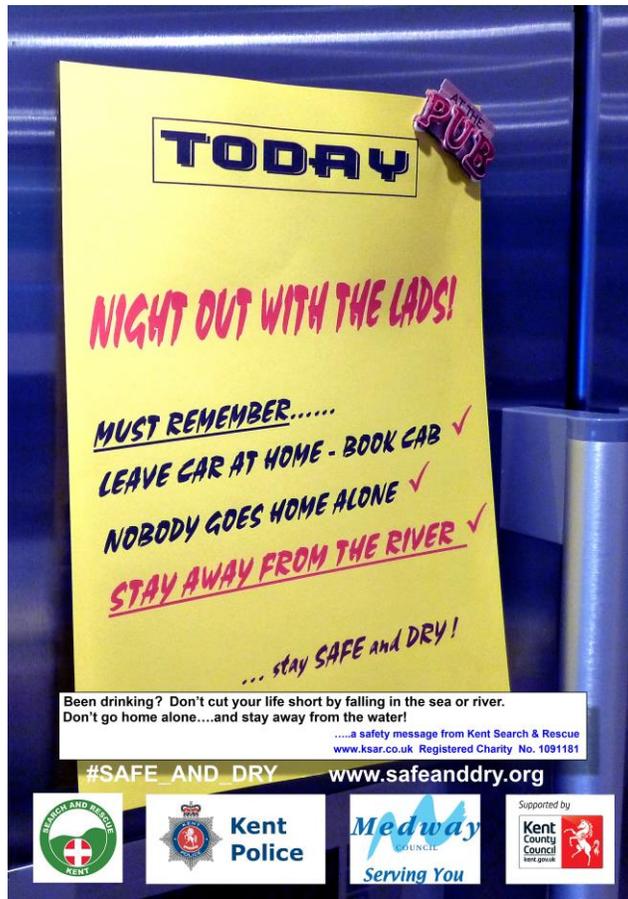
In Northern Ireland, the Lowland Rescue (Search and Rescue) team is the Community Rescue Service (CRS). For some years CRS has, on weekend nights, provided safety patrols, in the city of Belfast, along the River Lagan. To its everlasting credit, by means of this proactive approach, the CRS volunteers have saved numerous lives.

In KSAR, we decided that with our very limited resources, we might be most effective by combining a public awareness campaign (*the "hope for the best" part*) with river safety patrols (*the "plan for the worst" part*), in selected areas of Kent on Friday and Saturday nights in December. Why those nights of the week and that particular month do you think? Does published research support this thinking? If you had only very limited resources, where would you target them?

In December 2017 KSAR launched the KSAR #SAFE_AND_DRY campaign. The team were fortunate to receive funding from Kent County Council's Maidstone councillors to enable campaign leaflets, posters and beer mats to be printed, and some items of equipment purchased for patrol members, i.e. items which the team did not already have as part of its normal day to day role.



Advice leaflet



Poster

Around 13,000 campaign beer mats, along with leaflets were distributed to selected near-river pubs and bars, campaign messages pushed out via social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter, more leaflets handed out in shopping centres, interviews provided to the press and regional television channels, and training carried out along the River Medway where the public could see us!



Advice leaflet on pub bar



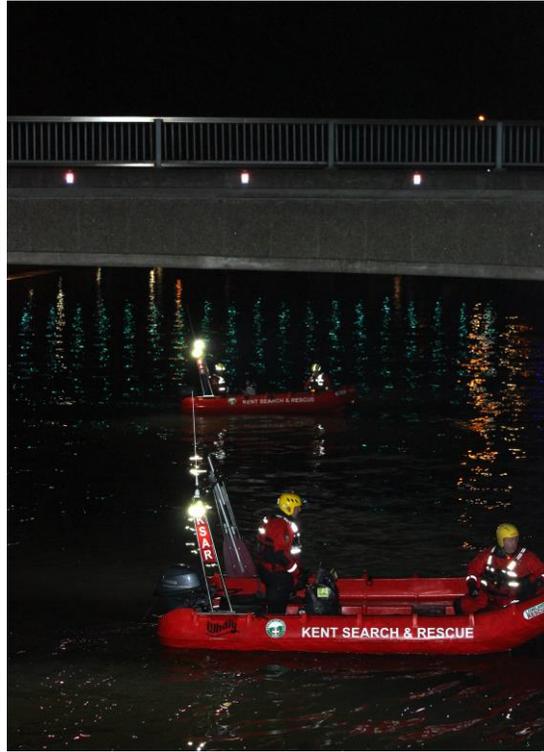
Engaging with the public from our "borrowed shop" in a shopping precinct!

In the initial launch period of the campaign over 180 #SAFE_AND_DRY tweets were sent out and they were seen by over 125,000 times!

Bravely, the family and friends of one victim, chose to support the campaign by giving television interviews, for which support KSAR will be forever grateful.

Every safety campaign needs to be "kept fresh", so for the December 2018 patrols KSAR filmed a short "story-based" campaign video "Reaching Tomorrow" (BBFC certificate "U"). Inspired by the film "Sliding Doors", it aims to show, the possible consequences of following and not following the #SAFE_AND_DRY campaign advice. In 2019 another campaign produced a rather similar video (a coincidence, I'm sure!).

The Friday and Saturday (December) night river patrols along selected stretches of the River Medway, typically comprise of KSAR boat teams (in the river!), mountain bike teams patrolling the tow paths (both wearing appropriate life jackets!, both supported by other team members in vehicles, all in road contact with each other and the police.



Night-time on the River Medway in Maidstone...can you see the KSAR boat?



It's cold

and dark on the river at night in December – ordinary and thermal photos.

For the December 2019, KSAR combined its #SAFE_AND_DRY patrols with its "Operation Concern" weekend work under which it supports Kent Police by responding to low risk "calls for concern", e.g. an elderly relative who is not responding to a relative's calls, thereby taking some of the pressure off of police on busy nights and providing additional response vehicles and first responder medics on the ground.

Has the KSAR #SAFE_AND_DRY campaign made a difference, thus far? Well, as the saying goes, "You can't prove a negative", so we'll never know how many people we prevented from drowning because they've made a plan to get home safely, but for each year that a Christmas goes past without someone drowning (in Kent) after a night out, we'll be happy! As for the patrols, there we know we've made a difference, where we've been "on the ground", caring for people contemplating suicide, rescuing people from the water, and even those who been involved in accidents on the land nearby!

Further reading

KSAR website (#SAFE_AND_DRY page): https://www.ksar.co.uk/community/safe_and_dry/

#SAFE_AND_DRY leaflet and poster (download): www.safeanddry.org

#SAFE_AND_DRY film "Reaching Tomorrow": www.safeanddry.info

"Men missing on a night out" study report: <https://www.missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/news/men-missing-on-a-night-out>

Media coverage

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/night-time-river-patrols-launched-to-135923/>
(includes video interviews).

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/the-heartbreaking-reason-for-river-patrols-218502/>

https://www.facebook.com/KMTVKent/videos/242686603262877/?video_source=permalink

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/search-teams-carry-out-river-rescue-194989/>

<https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2019-01-01/man-rescued-after-falling-into-river-medway/>

KSAR Op Concern: <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/help-for-police-to-deal-with-mental-health-calls-213249> (includes radio interview).

Other water safety campaign websites

Fire Service: <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Campaigns/Be-Water-Aware>

RLSS: <https://www.rlss.org.uk/pages/category/dont-drink-and-drown>

RNLI: <https://rnli.org/safety/respect-the-water>

West Mercia SAR: <https://westmerciasar.org.uk/homeanddry/>

Other water safety campaign videos (there are others!)

RNLI: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jncVb2onYC4&list=PLrYLpy0TFz07ky_izVOqfJxDkOMUe5wH

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