



World Water Safety

INTERNATIONAL LIFE SAVING FEDERATION

Gemeenteplein 26 – 3010 Leuven
Tel: (32)(16) 89.60.60 – Fax: (32)(16) 89.70.70
E-mail: ils.hq@telenet.be - Web: <http://www.ilsf.org>

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The International Lifesaving Federation (ILS) is the world authority for drowning prevention, lifesaving and lifesaving sport. ILS leads, supports and collaborates with national and international organisations engaged in drowning prevention, water safety, water rescue, lifesaving, lifeguarding and lifesaving sport and counts nowadays over 33 million members in over 135 countries.

The International Life Saving Federation is aware that it is common knowledge that drowning victims are very often misclassified. Therefore no real figures are available and ILS can only speak about best possible estimations. The estimations are considered acceptable by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Every year an estimated 12 to 15 million people worldwide are into trouble in water. That means about 40.000 people every day, or about 30 persons every minute. The majority are saved, most often by themselves, friends or family members, but also by professional lifesavers and lifeguards.

10 % of these near-drowning victims, namely 1,2 million people, die each year by drowning, which is more than 3.000 a day and about two people every minute. To keep the message clear we speak about one drowning every 30 seconds.

On top of the ten per cent drowning victims we also have to take into consideration a number of drowning related victims: firstly those who were saved and resuscitated too late and who suffer lifelong brain or other damages. Secondly those victims of diving or surfing accidents who suffer from decompression, paraplegia/quadriplegia, etc. and thirdly those victims of accidents during professional activity: they suffer from a variety of problems. These water related victims should not be forgotten.

We estimate that half of the real drowning accidents take place in the sea, which means that about 600.000 people die every year by drowning in the sea. Most often they drown during recreational activities, but also because of accidents whilst boating, surfing, diving or during professional activities. The other 600.000 drown in all kinds of inland artificial or natural waters. Less accidents happen in swimming pools because of more safety measures.

About 400.000 people of the aforementioned 600.000 people who drown in the sea, drown because they don't know or underestimate the dangers of the sea. The others drown because of accidents while boating, diving, surfing, fishing, or because of fauna/flora (sharks), suicide, alcohol abuse, etc. Most of them are inland tourists. We assume that 2 %, namely 8.000 people, are foreign tourists, which means that – worldwide – one foreign tourist per hour is dying by drowning in the sea.

Harald Vervaecke
Secretary General