

Spotlight on...

Water Safety

What the need was and how we identified it:

Over the last 3 years in Leeds, five people have lost their lives and eighty-two water rescue incidents have been attended by WYFRS(see table below).

It was identified that the provision of throw lines for public use; at strategic locations in the city centre, could assist in the saving of lives at these incidents. WYFRS responds to calls in minutes but cold water shock can set in quickly, even for a strong swimmer, making it impossible to get out.

Water rescue figures for Leeds district for the last three years:

	2015	2016	2017
Water rescue incidents	39	17	26
People rescued by firefighters	46	15	18
Fatalities	2	0	3
Injuries	5	7	11

What we did:

- Throwlines were installed in collaboration with Leeds City Council alongside the river in the City Centre last year to give the public a means of helping someone stricken in the water; prior to the arrival of the emergency services.
- In total, 14 throwlines have been installed between Neville Street and ASDA House in Leeds along both sides of the river. They are in a locked container for security purposes which is attached to an information board describing how to use the equipment.
- On discovering an individual in the water, members of the public follow the simple instructions on the marker board; calling 999 to report the incident and the individual board number which identifies their exact location, allowing Control to mobilise resources immediately.
- They are then given a padlock code over the phone to access the throwline whilst the fire service makes their way to the incident. By following the step by step guide they will provide the casualty with something to hold on to until assistance arrives.



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- In addition, frontline West Yorkshire Police officers have been trained in the use of throwlines and now carry them in their vehicles, in the hope that if they are in attendance before WYFRS, they can attempt to help a member of the public in the water, without having to enter the water themselves..

Outcomes:

The throwlines have been put into use and most recently at approximately 4am on the morning of Saturday 3rd March WYFRS received a call to location number 5 which is Riverside Court in Leeds city centre with reports of a female in the water.

White Watch Leeds: who have been instrumental in the scheme, arrived at the location to find a female casualty in the water clinging onto the throwline which had been successfully deployed by a member of the public.

In temperatures of -2 degrees she had managed to hold on long enough for Leeds crews to rescue her by using a ladder to assist her from the water.

Watch Commander Phil Rhodes said: "We got there just in time. Had it not been for the throwline installed at this location she may have perished in the freezing temperatures, without something to hold on to. She has been extremely lucky and the throwline undoubtedly saved her life."

What next?

We will continue to support the RLSS #DontDrinkAndDrown campaign and the annual Drowning Prevention Week starting on the 15th June 2018. Make connections with the Leeds Universities to spread the message during Freshers events.

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