



Weir safety

FACT SHEET

What is a weir?

A weir is a large wall that holds back river water so it can be slowly released downstream. Weirs are designed and built to serve a purpose – to regulate water flow. Weirs are dangerous and unpredictable places – you never know when water will be released from a weir and which part it will come from.

Why are weirs dangerous?

After heavy rain, an overflowing weir can become a drowning machine due to the volume of water flowing over the people underwater, making self-rescue and assisted rescue almost impossible.



THE DROWNING MACHINE

Being swept over a flooded weir is like being dumped by a constant barrage of plunging waves, with the churning water forcing you down. One cubic metre of water alone weighs a tonne – roughly the weight of a small car – so imagine several tonnes of rushing water constantly pushing you under. It doesn't matter how good a swimmer you are, swimming skills have little to do with your survival. Many people fail to realise that the faster water is flowing, the shallower it needs to be to sweep you over.

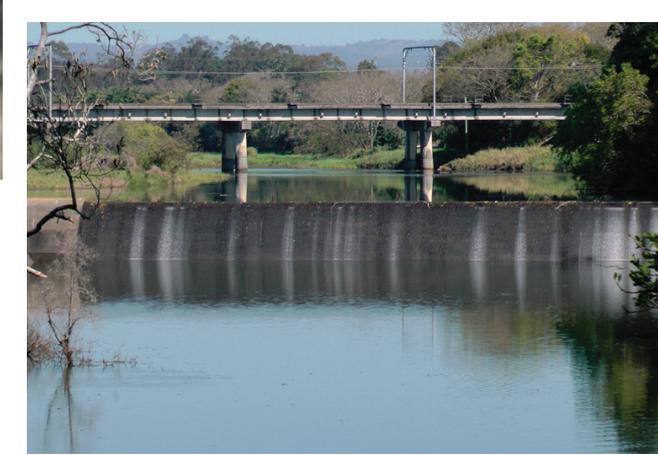
- It only takes ankle deep water to knock you off your feet.
- It only takes 60 seconds to drown, not enough time for anyone to call 000 for help.

Fast flowing water also hides dangers such as holes, rocks, debris and fallen trees. Often the biggest hazard from moving water is what is referred to as strainers. These are natural obstructions such as log jams (trees fallen into water) or obstructions like grids, fences and grates. Once entangled in a strainer the force of the water makes self-rescue nearly impossible and assisted rescue very difficult. Most natural strainers force people under water and drowning will occur almost immediately.

Debris and rubbish, such as tyres and shopping trolleys, can easily injure or trap a person underwater. Many weirs are made of solid concrete so unlike a beach where there is sand to soften the waves pounding down on you, the hard concrete can cause serious injury and damage if you are swept underwater.

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How to stay safe

Swimming in or near flooded weirs can be fatal. Never underestimate the swiftness of water. Although the surface water may be smooth, underneath the water is moving very fast.

Unlike our beaches, weirs are unpatrolled so there is no one on guard to supervise or save you from a dangerous situation.

Never walk in flooded water – only 15cm of swiftly moving water can sweep a person off their feet. The faster the water is flowing, the shallower the depth required to knock you over.

The best approach to staying safe is to avoid weirs. Seqwater has many recreational spaces available for use and encourages people to use them responsibly. For more information on these locations please visit www.seqwater.com.au

REMEMBER:

- Swimming in weirs and fast flowing water is fatal
- It only takes ankle deep water to knock you off your feet
- It only takes 60 seconds to drown
- It only takes one second to rethink your decision

If you have further questions about the content in this fact sheet, please feel free to contact us at corpcommunications@seqwater.com.au