

# YOUNG SCIENTISTS STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE

The Irish Coast Guard rolled out a number of emergency challenges in a bid to highlight water safety and increase awareness of their operations to over 60,000 students who turned up at this year's BT Young Scientist Exhibition at Dublin RDS in January.

As part of each 'Emergency Challenge', students were given details of a water-based emergency they had just witnessed and then they had to complete the steps on reporting that emergency by phone to both the 112 ECAS operator and subsequently the Coast Guard controller. This included attaining GPS co-ordinates from their phone.

For the second stage the participants stepped into the shoes of a Coast Guard volunteer and, after donning the safety gear, then entered a Coast Guard rescue boat where they rescued the casualty on board by performing CPR.

This may seem like a lot of tasks to complete within a short period of time but the students were introduced to some essential life skills – dialing '112', the provision of accurate positional information, including the use of smart phone functionality, correctly fitting of a life jacket, throwing a ring buoy and the importance of keeping them safely stored. And finally last but not least performing CPR; skills that may help them one day if needed.

## CONTINUED COLLABORATION

This was the Coast Guard's fourth year to attend the BT Young Scientist event in collaboration with the team from the Emergency Call Answering Service. ECAS plays a pivotal role in the first stages of an emergency 112/ 999 call before the call is transferred to one of the four emergency services control rooms – Gardaí, Ambulance Service, Fire Service and Coast Guard.

One of the challenges for the Coast Guard and other emergency services is to obtain early and timely information on any incident. Awareness of what number to dial in an emergency is critical as is the public understanding of the process involved in calling 112/999, while understanding where someone is located is critical to ensure that the right resources are quickly deployed.

As part of this year's exercise, particular emphasis was placed on the ability to provide accurate positional information using a smart phone-based GPS. In addition to the competition, and with the aim of keeping the stand interactive, the Coast Guard also ran hourly demonstrations on the proper use of life jackets and water safety.

This included getting the students to wear and activate a horse shoe life jacket to show how that a properly secure life jacket can easily allow you to freely move around, but having the benefit of keeping you afloat if needed.



*Pictured after winning the 'Emergency Challenge', Limerick students Matthew and Conor with Irish Coast Guard volunteers Sue McKinney, Drogheda Station, and Dermot McBrierty, Howth Station. (Pic: www.Newsfile.ie)*

