



Three migrants die attempting to cross Channel Free 291224

Description



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Three people have died attempting to cross the English Channel in a small boat on Sunday morning, the French coastguard says.

People ended up in the water after trying to board a boat off the coast of Sangatte, near Calais, at about 06:00 local time (05:00 GMT).

The three people later declared dead were recovered from the water by helicopter, while a further 45 were given treatment on the beach, many suffering from hypothermia. Four were taken to hospital.

It has been the deadliest year on record for Channel crossings.

Dame Angela Eagle, minister for border security and asylum, said lives had been lost because “ruthless criminals running the small boat trade are overloading people into unseaworthy vessels”.

She said the government was “committed to smashing these gangs” and was supporting the French authorities.

“It never stops,” the mayor of Sangatte Guy Allemand told AFP. “It’s crossing after crossing, without any let-up.”

He said seven people had needed intensive care after the incident.

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The French coastguard said a search was ongoing at sea for any other survivors.

The Home Office confirmed there had been an incident in French waters, with French authorities leading the response and investigation.

Pierre-Henri Dumont, MP for the Pas-de-Calais region, told the BBC: “Any attempt to cross the Channel in this way is very, very dangerous – but at this time of year, it is even more deadly.”

He said rescue teams can respond quickly, but current temperatures mean “spending even a few minutes in the water” can be fatal.

The incident follows four days in which 1,485 people made the journey, meaning it has been the busiest Christmas period since records began in 2018.

More than 36,000 people have crossed the Channel in small boats so far this year, surpassing the 2023 total of 29,437, government figures suggest.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), a UN agency which tracks the number of people who die crossing the Channel, says 77 people have died attempting to make the journey this year, external.

A number of other boats were reported to have departed from the coast on Sunday, the French coastguard said in its statement.

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