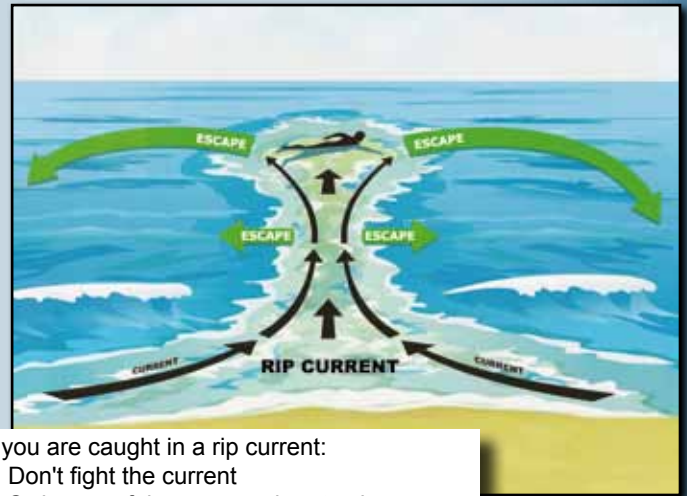


# RIP CURRENTS

The beauty of the Gulf Coast, attracts thousands every year. However, that beauty can disguise danger! Rip Currents are likely to be present in the high winds and rough seas that accompany a tropical storm or hurricane, so people should stay out of the water when a storm is approaching their area.

## What is a rip current?

A strong current or channel of rapidly flowing water moving AWAY from the shore that develops when excess water is piled against the shore during certain weather patterns. Rip Currents are dangerous because they can pull unprepared swimmers away from shore and into deeper waters. A rip current can become deadly when swimmers panic and struggle against the current while being pulled farther and farther away from the beach.



## What are some signs of a rip current?

A channel of churning, choppy water; a narrow channel of discolored or murky water; a line of seaward moving foam are all signs of possible rip currents.

- If you are caught in a rip current:
1. Don't fight the current
  2. Swim out of the current, then to shore
  3. If you can't escape, float, or tread water
  4. If you need help, call or wave for assistance

## What do you need to know before heading to the beach?

Swim at beaches with life guards, if possible. Ask local life guards or officials about the current rip current risk. Understand the flag system for the beach you are at! If you see a red flag, stay out of the water!



Courtesy of Dave Jones  
Orange Beach  
TS Debbie

## What should you do if caught in a rip current?

Stay Calm and **DO NOT** fight the current. Even strong swimmers cannot swim against these currents. Escape the current by swimming in a direction *parallel* to or along the shore line. When you are free of the current, swim **AT AN ANGLE** to the shore. If you are not able to escape, float or tread water until the current weakens then swim at an angle to the shore.

## 5 Flag System



## BEACH WARNING FLAGS

Alabama's public beaches in Baldwin County use the five flag system to alert beachgoers of surf conditions. Flags are posted at all public beach areas within Orange Beach, Gulf Shores and Gulf State Park, where surf conditions are monitored each day. When red flags are flying, conditions are life threatening to anyone entering the surf. Please remember, however, that the absence of red flags does not assure safe conditions. No flag warning system is used in Mobile County along the beaches of Dauphin Island, but dangerous surf hazards can still occasionally exist. Beach warning flag systems will vary in other locations, so please be aware of the differences before planning your trip to the beach.

Please note: On some public beaches, it is **ILLEGAL** to swim under a red flag!

**Be Safe! • Know how to swim • Never swim alone • If in doubt, don't go out**