Beach Hazards

Tsunami: If you feel an earthquake on the coast, no matter how small, immediately move to high ground or inland and stay there. The longer the earthquake, the more likely a tsunami will occur and may arrive within 10 minutes.

Sneaker Waves: Sneaker waves can strike without warning. Sneaker waves surge high up on the sand with enough force to knock you down and drag you into the ocean. Don't be fooled by an ocean that looks calm; there can be 30 minutes of small waves right before a set of larger sneaker waves strike.

Rising Tides: Rising tides can cut off trails around headlands and cause sneaker waves to wash farther up the beach. Use a tide book or check tides online to plan your trips to the beach.

Rip Currents: Rip currents are strong outgoing currents that can drag you into cold, deep water. Northern California beaches always have rip currents and cold water, so they are not good for swimming without a wetsuit.

Steep Cliffs: High steep cliffs can collapse under your feet, sending you crashing down the cliff. Stay far back from cliff edges.

Rocks and Jetties: Being on top of high rocks may seem safe but waves can overtop rocks without warning and knock you into the ocean and rocks below. Avoid climbing on exposed rocks.

Three to five people drown on the north coast each year due to sneaker waves, cold water paralysis, or entering the ocean to rescue dogs.

Your decisions could save you or someone you love.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Weather Forecast, Storm, and High Surf Advisories

Recorded forecast: (707) 443-7062
www.weather.gov/Eureka

Tide Tables

Check tide tables at park visitor centers, or
www.wrh.noaa.gov/eka/marine

Tsunamis

National Tsunami Warning Center
www.tsunami.gov

Humboldt Earthquake Education Center
Geology Department, Cal Poly Humboldt
(707) 826-6019
https://rctwg.humboldt.edu/

NOAA Weather Radio

The best way to stay informed on changing coastal weather conditions is to carry a NOAA Weather Radio. They are inexpensive and available at most electronic stores or online.

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Weather Service
@NWSEureka

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Redwood National and State Parks
@RedwoodNPS

State of California
California State Parks
North Coast Redwoods District
@NorCoStateParks

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management California
Arcata Field Office
@BLMca

Staying Safe on North Coast Beaches

North coast beaches are rugged, beautiful, and remote. Coastal areas offer scenic vistas, tidepool exploration, hiking, whale watching, and dramatic sunsets.

Be safe while enjoying the beach. Don't let the ocean catch you off guard.

Beach Safety Tips

Choose your beach well. Steep beaches are dangerous. **Flatter, wider beaches are a better choice.** Select beaches with easy access to high ground in case of a tsunami.

Before heading to the beach. Use the links on the back of this brochure to check for high surf advisories or sneaker wave threats before you go to the beach. Check the timing of the high tides. Rising tides can cut off your access and cause waves to surge farther up the beach.

Plan your way to safety. When on the beach always look for a route to safety from rising tides, sets of large waves, or a tsunami that forces you to go to high ground quickly. Remember to allow extra time to get to safety if you have small children or are with someone that has limited mobility.

Cold water. North coast beaches are not swimming beaches. The extremely cold water can paralyze your arms and legs within minutes, making it impossible to keep your head above water.

Don't go in after your dog. Dogs pulled into the turbulent surf almost always get out on their own while their human rescuers usually do not. Stay on dry land and wait for them to swim back to shore. Don't go in, let them swim.

Call 911. Don't go into the water after a person who gets pulled into the surf. You will likely get into trouble requiring rescuers to divide their time between multiple victims. Call 911 and keep track of the person's location in the water so you can guide rescuers to the person in trouble.

Tsunami Safety

Two Ways to Know a Tsunami is Coming:

Natural Warnings

Ground shaking, **a loud ocean roar**, and the **water receding unusually far** exposing the sea floor are nature's warnings that a tsunami may be coming. If you observe any of these signs, immediately move to higher ground or inland - as far as you can safely go. A tsunami may arrive within minutes. Stay away from low coastal areas until told by officials that the danger has passed.

Official Warnings

You may learn about **Tsunami Warnings** on local TV and radio stations, alerts from NOAA weather radios, alerts on your phone from Wireless Emergency Alert system or in some cases by announcements from emergency officials, airplanes, or outdoor sirens. Move away from beaches or harbor areas and seek more information. Tune into local radio or television stations for more information.

Both Natural and Official Warnings are equally important. Respond to whatever you hear or observe first!

Tsunamis are Tricky

- The first wave or surge will not be the largest.
- Tsunami surges can last up to 12 hours and in some cases much longer.
- Just when you think it is all over, another very large surge may come.

Sneaker Wave Safety

Don't be fooled by an ocean that looks calm. Sneaker waves are a set of waves that seem to come out of nowhere and can catch you off guard. They can quickly surge over 100 yards up onto the dry sand with enough force to knock you down and drag you into the surf. Once in the ocean, survival is unlikely because of strong currents, turbulent surf, and cold water that causes your arms and legs to loose strength within minutes.

Stay back and stay alert. Stay farther away from the surf than you think is necessary. There can be up to 30 minutes of small waves right before a set of sneaker waves strike. Rising tides also cause waves to wash farther up the beach making the waves more dangerous while also cutting off access around headlands, rocks, and trails.

Never turn your back on the ocean. It is dangerous to be near the surf with your attention diverted. If beach activities like surf fishing or agate hunting require you to do this, consider wearing a life vest so you have a chance of surviving if you get pulled into the surf.

Choosing a Safe Beach

Steep vs. Flat

Steep beaches can be deadly because the full force of the ocean waves can surge high up onto the dry sand, strike with incredible force then drag you into the surf. These beaches have steep drop-offs and coarse sand that washes out from under your feet, making it impossible to get a foothold. Beaches that separate lagoons from the ocean are especially steep (Big Lagoon, Dry Lagoon, Freshwater Spit).

Flatter, wider beaches are better choices.

Access to High Ground

Look for beaches with high ground that you can reach on foot within 10 minutes. Escaping to high ground or inland generally takes longer from beaches that separate lagoons or bays from the ocean.

Cell Phone Coverage

Look for beaches with cell phone coverage. This allows you to quickly call for help in an emergency. It also provides you with a way to receive official Tsunami Warnings through the Wireless Emergency Alerts system (make sure your phone and carrier participates in this program).

Children

Choose a safe beach for children. Flatter beaches are better. Children are more vulnerable to sneaker waves and other beach hazards. Have children play far from the water's edge so they are not exposed to sneaker waves. Watching your children is not enough - keep them close to you and far from the water.