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Public Information Statement  
National Weather Service Headquarters Washington DC  
1143 AM EDT Wed May 29 2013

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From: Mark Tew  
Chief, Marine and Coastal Weather Services Branch

Subject: National Rip Current and Beach Safety Week  
June 2-8, 2013

Annually, rip currents claim the lives of more than 100 people. NWS, Sea Grant (SG), and the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) have partnered for national Rip Current Awareness Week and Beach Safety Week, June 2-8, 2013. The NWS, SG, and USLA are seeking your help to raise awareness about two dangerous beach hazards: rip currents and breaking waves in the surf zone.

According to the United States Lifesaving Association, annually lifeguards rescue more than 50,000 swimmers from rip currents. That is why it is so important to swim near a lifeguard. USLA statistics show that the chances of drowning on a beach patrolled by a lifeguard is 1 in 18 million.

To ensure your beautiful vacation isn't spoiled by a rip current or breaking wave in the surf zone follow these safety tips: Before leaving for your beach vacation learn how to swim and not just in a pool. You should be a strong swimmer BEFORE going into the ocean, Great Lakes or Gulf of Mexico. Swimming in an ocean with its winds and changing currents is much more difficult. Fatigue sets in much faster than in a pool. Knowledge is power. Know how to identify rip currents. A good place to start is: [www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov](http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov)

- Rip currents are channelized currents of water flowing away from shore at surf beaches. Typically they form at breaks in sandbars, and also near structures, such as jetties and piers.
- Rip currents are common and can be found on most surf beaches, including the Great Lakes and Gulf of Mexico.
- Some clues that a rip current is present are a channel of churning, choppy water; a difference in water color; a line of foam, seaweed or debris moving seaward; a break in the

incoming wave pattern.

- This break in the incoming wave pattern can look like smooth safe water. This is actually the rip current knocking down the incoming waves as this river of water returns to the ocean.

When you arrive at the beach, check with the lifeguard about surf conditions and rip currents before going into the surf zone. The lifeguard knows where the rip currents are as well as other dangers along the beach and in the surf.

Read all posted signs, such as the Break The Grip Of The Rip® Beach sign. This sign informs the public about the presence of rip currents and how to escape them.

Learn the beach warning flag system. No flag means there are no dangers present. Even the green means use caution. Swim with a buddy. Never swim alone. Bring a cell phone in case you need to call 911.

Watch your children carefully. A sudden wave or current could quickly drag them out to the ocean. A child can drown in seconds.

Never swim near piers, jetties, or groins where there are permanent rip currents.

If caught in a rip:

- Stay calm.
- Don't fight the current.
- Escape the current by swimming in a direction following the shoreline. When free from the pull of the current, swim at an angle away from the current toward shore.
- If at any time you feel you will be unable to reach shore, draw attention to yourself: face the shore, call or wave for help.
- Have a buddy or two on the beach watching you, should you need help, they can quickly get help.
- Enter the water feet first. Diving into breaking waves is dangerous. You don't know how deep the water is, there might be a sandbar just beneath. Breaking waves, large or small, can flip you and drive your head into the wet sand which is like concrete causing severe neck and spinal injuries.

Respect the power of the ocean! Remember! NEVER turn your back on the ocean. Ocean waves can hit you suddenly causing severe neck and spinal cord injuries. Even small waves can be dangerous.

For more information on how to Break The Grip Of The Rip® check out

[www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov](http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov)

To learn more about other beach hazards go to:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/beachhazards/>

Or contact:

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Rip Current Program and Beach Hazards Program

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NWS Public Information Notices are online:

<http://www.weather.gov/os/notif.htm>

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