

(NOAA) information about Beach Hazards and How You Can Be Safe:

Know what the warning flags mean. Not all beaches have flags. Read and obey the posted beach warning signs and flags you may see. You already know you shouldn't cross a road without first looking both ways for traffic. So, you should know that you shouldn't go into the water at a beach before first looking for the flags, signs of rip currents and thinking about the safest place to swim. Knowing these things and taking the few moments of time to do this can make all the difference for your safety, while you are at the beach.

BEACH FLAG WARNING SYSTEM



Know what rip currents are and how to spot them. There are many different kinds of rip currents. But, most rip currents are typically a narrow seaward flowing current that extends from the shoreline out to a position just beyond the line of breaking waves. Rip currents exist to bring the water that has come onto the shore

with the breaking waves, back out and away from the shore. Some rip currents are extremely difficult to see, or may form unpredictably. You can spot most rip currents by looking for signs of a dark gap that looks like a path through the surf. There will be a noticeable difference and darker water color in the rip current. Or, you may see a line of foam or floating seaweed moving in a steady path out toward the sea. Wearing polarized sunglasses can help make it easier to spot the clues of a rip current, especially on bright sunny days.

Rip currents are powerful and can occur at any beach which has breaking waves. Don't place yourself in harms way. Lack of skills to identify rip currents is a major safety concern. Incidents involving rip currents can be prevented. When people are able to recognize the signs of an operating rip current they can avoid that area in the water.



A rip current will Not pull you under the water and is Not "under tow".

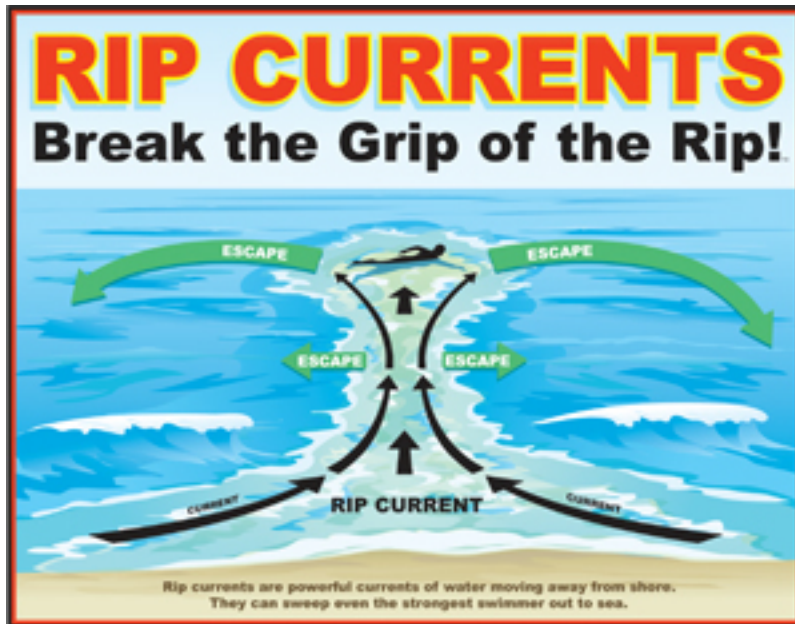
A rip current is Not a "rip tide", as it is Not a tide.

A Rip Current Is A Steady Flowing Current.

Know what to do if you see someone who is caught in a rip current. The best thing you can do for them is to throw them some form of flotation. This will get to them in time for them to hold onto and keep them afloat, while you go get help.

Know what to do if you find yourself caught in a rip current. You can stay safe, if you STAY CALM, FLOAT to conserve your energy, SIGNAL WAVE YOUR ARM WHILE CALLING FOR HELP, and THINK to assess the situation, your surroundings and what your options may be. You can be caught in a rip current and not realize it, until you find yourself being pulled away from the beach, while struggling to swim causes you fatigue and you are not getting any closer to the shore. If this happens to you, try not to panic, just float and conserve your energy.

Do Not try to swim against the flow of a rip current. Doing so will exhaust your energy and you won't win that fight - Not a survival option. The best way you can be safe is if you relax, focus on floating with the flow of the current and know it will stop flowing at the line of breaking waves. If you have enough energy and you feel able, your best option may be to try swimming to either side of the rip, parallel to the shore, aiming for the whitewater, then swim toward the shore, hoping you don't get caught in another rip current along the way.



- IF CAUGHT IN A RIP CURRENT**
- ◆ Don't fight the current
 - ◆ Swim out of the current, then to shore
 - ◆ If you can't escape, float or tread water
 - ◆ If you need help, call or wave for assistance

- SAFETY**
- ◆ Know how to swim
 - ◆ Never swim alone
 - ◆ If in doubt, don't go out

www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov
www.usla.org



Knowledge is power that can help you take control of the situation to make the best decisions for your safety.

Fear is Not Your Friend in a rip current. Panic and fatigue from trying to fight a rip are the cause of tragedy. People have a panic response, because it can be a scary experience.

The best approach to take to keep you safe, is one which eliminates panic. Even the very fit and best of swimmers can find themselves in trouble, if they panic and fatigue takes over.

Most rip current incidents occur during beautiful blue sky beach weather conditions. Rip currents are complex and can be dangerous. They need breaking waves to form and there are many different kinds of rip currents. Here are some examples:

- **Most Rip Currents flow straight out.** This kind of rip will bring you to a place just beyond the breaking waves, where the current will no longer operate.
- **Channelized Rip Currents** can stay in the same place for long periods of time.
- **Boundary Rips** are strong rip currents found along the sides of piers and jetties.
- **Flash Rips** suddenly occur, operating in areas where there is a large grouping of waves breaking. They are the most difficult to see and they are unpredictable. Flash Rips are among the most dangerous of rip currents.

The signs that a person in the water is drowning are often missed, before they go under water. A drowning victim doesn't look like what you see in the movies and on television. When a person is drowning, they go silent, becoming unable to call for help and unable to move their arms to properly reach for a flotation device.

Signs to watch for when a person in the water is drowning:

- *Head low in the water, mouth at water level*
- *Eyes glassy and empty, unable to focus*
- *Eyes are closed*
- *Hair over forehead or eyes*
- *Not using legs - vertical*
- *Hyperventilating or gasping*
- *Trying to swim in a particular direction but not making headway*
- *Trying to roll over on the back*

- *Appear to be climbing an invisible ladder*

WATCH THE WATER

Drowning Doesn't Look Like Drowning


Signs of Drowning

1. Facing Shore
2. Mouth at Water Level
3. Head tilted back
4. Body Vertical
5. Climbing ladder motion

Drowning is silent-know the signs

Designate a water watcher-someone who's sole responsibility is to monitor swimmers in the water

Never swim alone

 **NWS CLE** www.weather.gov/greatlakes/beachhazards
Currentsmart.org