



Earth Gauge™ - Rip Current Awareness Week

Environmental Information for Broadcast Meteorologists

NOAA's National Weather Service, the National Sea Grant College Program, North Carolina Sea Grant, and the U.S. Lifesaving Association have designated **June 3-9, 2007** as **National Rip Current Awareness Week**. Together, these organizations are working to raise public awareness about rip currents – what they are, how they form, and how beachgoers can stay safe. While not everyone lives near a beach, it is estimated that over 180 million Americans visit the coast each year, spending an average of 10 days. Summer is a peak travel time, and a great time to remind your viewers to play it safe at their local beaches and vacation destinations.

What are rip currents?

Rip currents are narrow, strong channels of water currents flowing away from shore. The formation of rip currents results from complex interactions between waves, currents, water levels, and the shape of the ocean bottom near-shore. Rip currents form along any coastline that has breaking waves, including the Great Lakes, and are most likely to be dangerous when surf conditions are high. They often form where there are breaks in sandbars, low-lying areas on the ocean floor, or around man-made structures such as jetties and piers.

Rip currents can move extraordinarily fast – they have an average speed of one- to two-feet per second, and speeds as high as eight-feet per second have been documented! Strong rip currents can quickly carry a swimmer away from the shore.

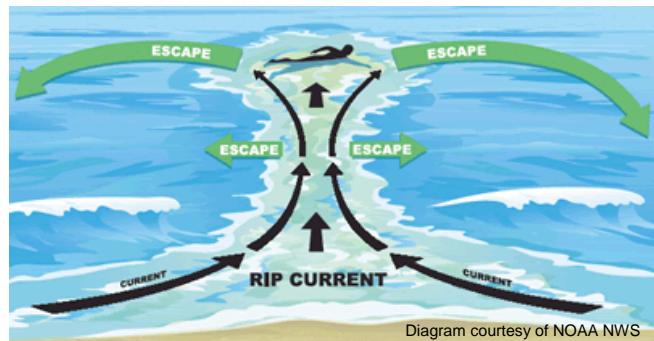
How do I spot a rip current?

While the following clues can indicate a rip current, they may be very difficult to spot. Make sure to check with the lifeguard at your local beach or check the beach forecast to find out if there is a rip current risk. Look for:

- An area with noticeable difference in water color;
- Churning or choppy water;
- Foam, seaweed, or other debris moving steadily out towards sea;
- A break in incoming waves.

Tips for Avoiding and Surviving Rip Currents

- Always be cautious and do not swim alone. If you are in doubt about a certain area, don't go out.
- Try to swim at beaches with lifeguards, and follow all instructions they give.
- If you are caught in a rip current:
 - Remain calm and do not fight the current. Swim parallel to the shoreline to get out of the current, and then swim towards shore.
 - If you cannot swim out of the current, tread water or float. Once you're out of the current, swim towards shore.
 - If you cannot reach the shore, call for help and wave your arms to get the attention of someone on the beach.
- If you see someone caught in a rip current:
 - Call for help – either a lifeguard or 9-1-1.
 - Throw something that floats to the victim and tell them how to escape the current.
 - Use extreme caution – many people drown trying to save another person from a rip current.



Learn more about rip currents and Rip Current Awareness Week at the NOAA National Weather Service Rip Current Safety Web site: www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov.



4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 160
Washington, DC 20008
www.neefusa.org www.earthgauge.net