

SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT

Public Information Office

MEDIA RELEASE



For Release – May 20th, 10 am

Surf Warnings and Beach Safety Tips

San Francisco, CA - Summer is approaching! With the warmer weather, comes increased risk to residents and visitors. Along the California coast, there are dangerous rip currents which can lead to dire circumstances if you aren't informed. The National Park Service (NPS), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Weather Service (NOAA), and the San Francisco Fire Department are teaming up to help educate beach goers about the common hazards on Northern California beaches. These agencies are charged with protecting the people and resources of this coastline and are coming together to give the public information to help them stay safe while on the coast.

Recently, there have been several close calls and unfortunate tragedies in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), primarily due to rip currents. NOAA officials advise "NOAA's National Weather Service encourages people to visit our beautiful Bay Area coastlines all year round. Respecting the power of the ocean and having a safety plan will go a long way to ensure an enjoyable visit. The ocean can be insidiously dangerous in the summer months, luring people in during times of heat and seemingly benign conditions only to be swept into cold turbulent waters. The US Pacific coastline attracts visitors from around the world for a reason, its rugged beauty. Live to share your wonderful stories and photos and be ocean safe."

Although San Francisco open shorelines **DO NOT** have traditional lifeguards, GGNRA does provide Ocean Rescue personnel who patrol Ocean Beach. Ocean Rescue personnel are not lifeguards. Officials from GGNRA want to remind beach goers that "Ocean Rescue's primary focus is to make proactive and educational contacts to spread the word that Ocean Beach is **NOT** a swimming beach, and the public should **NOT** enter the water." Swimming and wading are discouraged activities at non-lifeguarded beaches. Those who desire to swim are encouraged to go to Stinson Beach where GGNRA provides on duty lifeguards between Memorial Day to Labor Day, seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 6p.m.

The warning signs posted at the entrances to our beaches are a constant reminder of the dangers our beaches present. If you see something that you believe is an emergency, even if you're not sure, call 911 and let us make the determination.

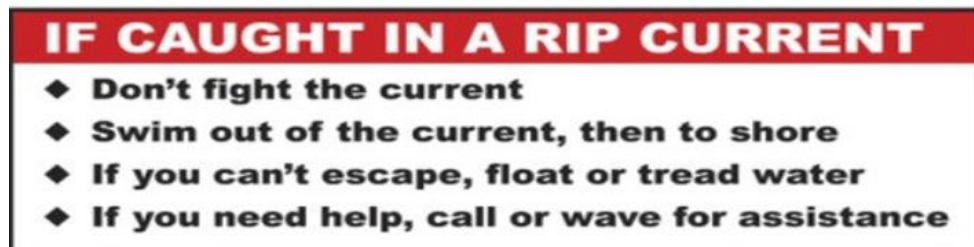
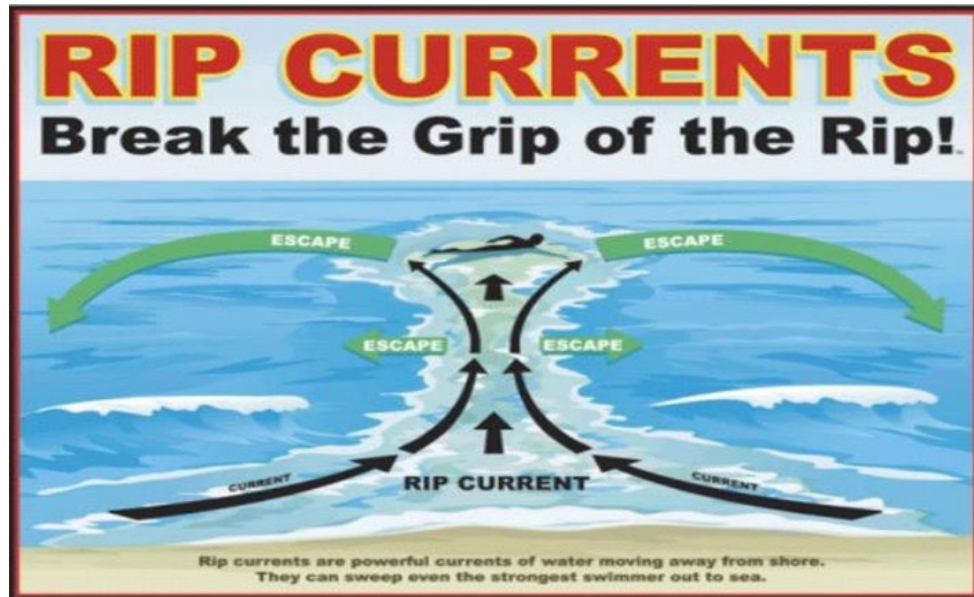
SAFETY TIPS:

1. Swimming is **STRONGLY** discouraged at Ocean Beach due to the dangerous rip currents. People have been swept out to sea in 3 feet of water, disappearing in seconds.
2. Rip currents are the number one risk at most beaches. If you find yourself in a rip current, remain calm; do not fight the current, swim parallel to shore and then, in towards the beach.
3. Even though it may be warm out on the shore, the water can be cold, which can cause hypothermia.
4. Stinson Beach is safe for swimming as it has lifeguards.
5. Keep pets on a leash and do not swim after them if they get swept into the sea. Most dogs will get out of the water on their own. Please don't make them watch their handler get rescued.

6. Stay off rocks in and around the shore.
7. While boating, ensure your safety gear is in working order and that every person onboard has a life jacket that fits. Carry a VHF radio, know the waters and expected weather, and file a float plan with a friend.
8. Educate yourself on rip currents, local demographics, and sneaker waves.

RIP CURRENTS:

1. Stay calm.
2. If caught in a rip current, do not fight the current.
3. Swim parallel to shore, and then once out of the current, back towards shore.
4. If you can't escape, float or tread water to conserve energy until you are rescued.
5. If you need help, wave your hands high in the air and call for help.



SFFD Public Information Office - firepio@sfgov.org – 415 558-3404 sf-fire.org

