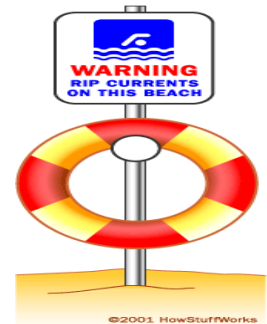


# SEMPER SAFE

## “Rip Currents – Number 1 Beach Hazard”



Rip currents are powerful, channeled currents of water flowing away from shore. They typically extend from the shoreline, through the surf zone, and past the line of breaking waves. Rip currents can occur at any beach with breaking waves. Rip currents move along the **surface** of the water, pulling you straight out into the ocean.

Rip currents are responsible for approximately 100 deaths every year in the United States. In 2013, 80 people drowned in rip currents according to a fatalities report released last week by the National Weather Service.

Seven people died in rip currents off the coast of North Carolina last year, the fourth-highest number of rip current-related drowning's in the country. This was the most deaths since officials began keeping state records more than a decade ago.

Rip currents are the number-one concern for beach lifeguards: More than 80 percent of all beach rescues are related to rip currents. Yet on beaches protected by lifeguards, the odds of drowning are one in 18 million, according to the U.S. Lifeguard Association. That's five times safer than on unprotected beaches. As deadly as rip currents are, it's not that hard to survive one -- if you stay calm and know exactly what to do.

### How to Identify Rip Currents

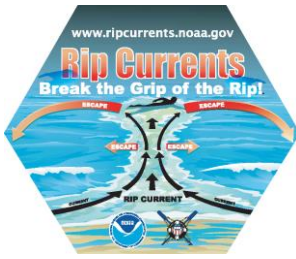
Look for any of these clues:

- A channel of churning, choppy water
- An area having a notable difference in water color
- A line of foam, seaweed, or debris moving steadily seaward
- A break in the incoming wave pattern

None, one, or more of the above clues may indicate the presence of rip currents. Rip currents are often not readily or easily identifiable to the average beachgoer. For your safety, be aware of this major surf zone hazard. Polarized sunglasses make it easier to see the rip current clues provided above by cutting down glare and reflecting sunlight off the ocean's surface.

### How to Avoid and Survive Rip Currents

- **Learn how to swim!!!**
- Whenever possible, swim at a lifeguard-protected beach and never swim alone.
- Obey all instructions and orders from the lifeguards, and posted signs/flag conditions. Lifeguards are trained to identify potential hazards. Ask a lifeguard about the conditions before entering the water.
- Stay at least 100 feet from piers and jetties. Permanent rip currents often exist along side these structures.
- If you see someone in trouble, get help from a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not available, have someone call 911. Throw the victim something that floats and yell instructions on how to escape. Do not enter the water to help. Remember, many people drown while trying to save someone else from a rip current.



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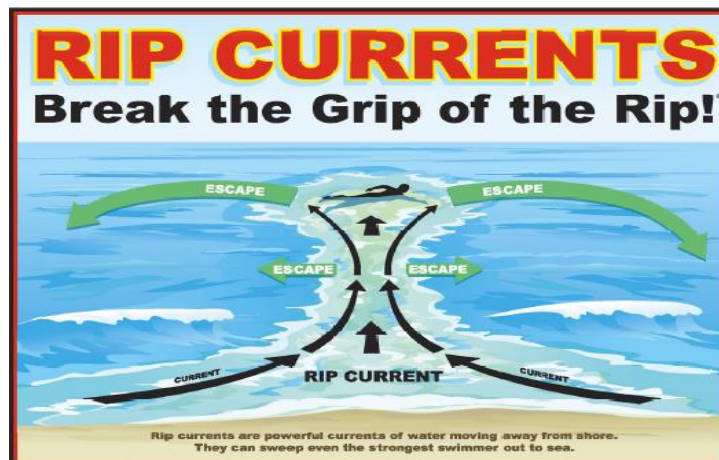


## How to Avoid and Survive Rip Currents Continued:

- Remain calm to conserve energy and think clearly
- Pay close attention to children and elderly when at the beach. Even in shallow water, wave action can cause loss of footing.
- Never fight against the current. Fighting the current will tire you, and you will be too fatigued to swim.
- Swim out of the current in a direction following the shoreline. When out of the current, swim at an angle--away from the current--towards shore.
- If you are unable to swim out of the rip current, float or calmly tread water. When out of the current, swim towards shore.
- If you are still unable to reach shore, draw attention to yourself by waving your arm and yelling for help.

## Rip Current Myth

A rip current is a horizontal current. Rip currents do not pull people under the water--they pull people away from shore. Drowning deaths occur when people pulled offshore are unable to keep themselves afloat and swim to shore. This may be due to any combination of fear, panic, exhaustion, or lack of swimming skills.



The greatest safety precaution that can be taken is to recognize the danger of rip currents and always remember to swim at beaches with lifeguards. If caught in a rip current at an unguarded beach, how you respond could make the difference between life and death. Have fun and Semper Safe.

**As Marines, Sailors and Civil Servants we live by our core values. So think before you jeopardize the safety of yourself, your fellow Marines, Sailors, civilian employees or family members, and remember SEMPER SAFE!**