

Sea Colony

BEACH SAFETY

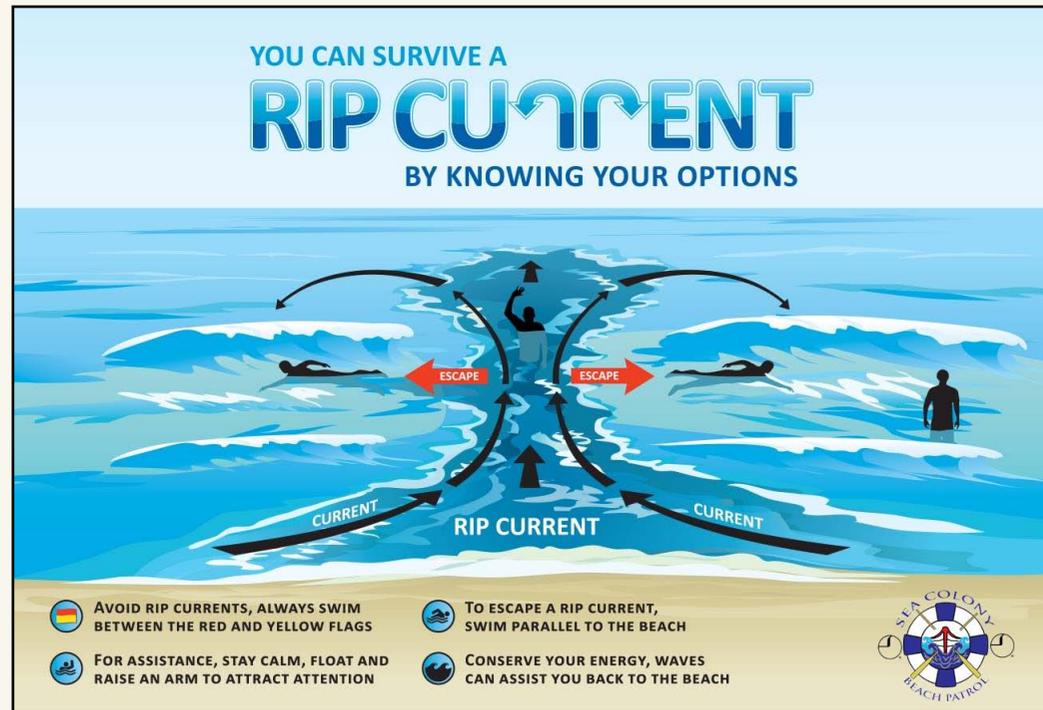
**HOW TO SPOT  
& SURVIVE  
RIP CURRENTS**



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, including the Great Lakes.

Rip currents can be killers. The **United States Lifesaving Association** estimates that the annual number of deaths due to rip currents on our nation's beaches exceeds 100. Rip currents account for over 80% of rescues performed by surf beach lifeguards.

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. The United States Lifesaving Association has calculated the chance that a person will drown while attending a beach protected by USLA affiliated lifeguards at 1 in 18 million. If caught in a rip current at an unguarded beach, how you respond could make the difference between life and death.



## Overview:

### Why Rip Currents Form

As waves travel from deep to shallow water, they will break near the shoreline. When waves break strongly in some locations and weakly in others, this can cause circulation cells which are seen as rip currents: narrow, fast-moving belts of water traveling offshore.

### Why Rip Currents are Dangerous

Rip currents are the leading surf hazard for all beachgoers. They are particularly dangerous for weak or non-swimmers. Rip current speeds are typically 1-2 feet per second. However, speeds as high as 8 feet per second have been measured—this is faster than an Olympic swimmer can sprint! Thus, rip currents can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea.

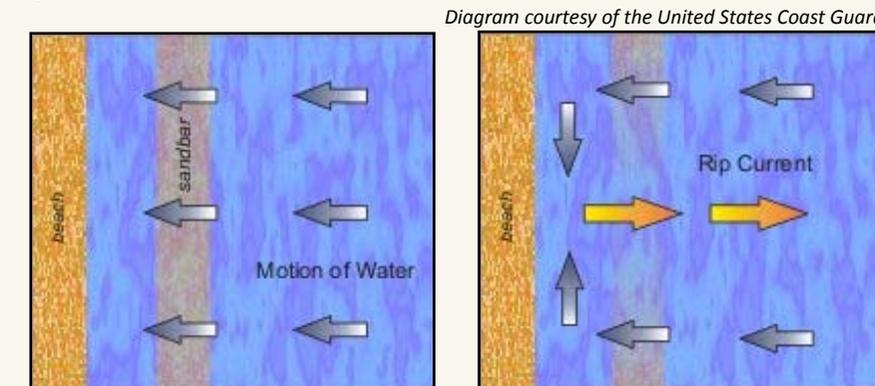
Over 100 drownings due to rip currents occur every year in the United States. More than 80% of water rescues on surf beaches are due to rip currents. Rip currents can occur at any surf beach with breaking waves, including the Great Lakes

### When Rip Currents Form

Rip currents can be found on many surf beaches everyday. Under

most tide and sea conditions the speeds are relatively slow. However, under certain wave, tide, and beach profile conditions the speeds can quickly increase to become dangerous to anyone entering the surf. The strength and speed of a rip current will likely increase as wave height and wave period increase. They are most likely to be dangerous during high surf conditions as the wave height and wave period increase.

Rip currents most typically form at low spots or breaks in sandbars, and also near structures such as groins, jetties and piers. Rip currents can be very narrow or extend in widths to hundreds of yards. The seaward pull of rip currents varies: sometimes the rip current ends just beyond the line of breaking waves, but sometimes rip currents continue to push hundreds of yards offshore.



## 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 and 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.

## How to Avoid and Survive Rip Currents

- Never swim alone.
- Be cautious at all times, especially when swimming at unguarded beaches. If in doubt, don't go out!
- Whenever possible, swim at a lifeguard protected beach.
- Obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards.
- If caught in a rip current, remain calm to conserve energy and think clearly.
- Don't fight the current. Swim out of the current in a direction following the shoreline. When out of the current, swim 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: face the shore, wave your arms, and yell for help.
- If you see someone in trouble, get help from a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not available, have someone call 9-1-1 . Throw the rip current victim something that floats and yell instructions on how to escape. Remember, many people drown while trying to save someone else from a rip current.



## 5 TIPS FOR PREVENTING INJURY AND ILLNESS

Few things scream “summer” more than soaking up some rays with the scent of salt water in the air and sand between your toes. According to the *Environmental Protection Agency*, Americans take about two billion trips to the beach each year.

But it's not all about fun in the sun (sorry). A relaxing beach weekend can turn sour with just one rogue wave. While most bad beach days end with little more than a sunburn in need of a good soak in aloe vera gel, serious injuries are more common than we'd like to believe. **Here are a few tips to help you keep your end-of-summer beach trips as safe as can be.**



### 1. CHECK THE LIFEGUARD STAND INFORMATION BOARD

The board located behind the lifeguard stands and at the pools provide important information to keep you safe and aware of current conditions.



### 2. Pick a swimming area near a lifeguard

Lifeguards are there for a reason — they know and can see things about the beach that most beachgoers don't. Take note of where they're stationed on the beach and stay near them when swimming — most drownings occur at unguarded sites.



### 3. Save your skin

Just one blistering sunburn in childhood or adolescence more than doubles a person's chance for developing melanoma later in life. Keep the red at bay by slathering on a broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, and make sure you have a source of shade



### 4. Watch for sun sickness/stroke

A few hours of baking under the sun can cause some seriously uncool symptoms and may even lead to severe sickness. Heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and sun poisoning can all result from dehydration and extended exposure to high temperatures. If you or someone display any of these symptoms, get out of the sun and heat. Drink plenty of water, and take a cool bath or shower. If symptoms are on the severe side, it's best to seek medical attention.



### 5. Stay Hydrated

Extended exposure to heat and the relaxing effects of waves can easily lead to disorientation and reduced energy. Be sure to bring plenty of water and snacks down to the sand with you, and use them.