



STATE OF FLORIDA

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

CHARLIE CRIST
Governor

RUBEN D. ALMAGUER
Interim Director

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CONTACT: MIKE STONE or
LESLIE D. STEELE
(850) 413-9883
www.floridadisaster.org

HIGH RISK OF DANGEROUS RIP CURRENTS EXPECTED TODAY FOR WESTERN PANHANDLE BEACHES

~ A Moderate Risk of Rip Currents is Forecast Through the Weekend ~

TALLAHASSEE- Florida Division of Emergency Management officials are urging beachgoers along the Western Panhandle to use caution today as a high risk of dangerous rip currents is expected along the state's beaches from Destin westward.

"It is important that beachgoers heed safety warnings from lifeguards and local officials and stay out of the water if red flags are flying," State Meteorologist Ben Nelson said. "We want everyone to respect the power of water and safely enjoy our beaches this weekend."

The National Weather Service is also forecasting a moderate risk of frequent rip currents across the area on Saturday and Sunday.

Rip currents, which are the leading surf hazard for all beachgoers, are channels of water that rapidly flow away from the shoreline and can pull unprepared swimmers into deeper offshore waters. High-risk rip currents are determined to be dangerous because they present life-threatening conditions to those who enter the surf.

On Wednesday, September 16 two swimmers drowned and 11 persons required rescue in rough surf and rip currents near Perdido Key. State and local emergency officials want all beachgoers to understand their ability to swim and avoid going into the water during unsafe conditions.

Some important safety tips to keep in mind if you witness a person stranded in the water:

- 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: a lifejacket, a cooler or inflatable ball.
- Yell instructions on how to escape. The best method is to 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.
- Remember, many people drown while trying to save someone else from a rip current.

Beachgoers who want to learn more about rip currents can visit www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov. For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: www.FloridaDisaster.org. For the latest weekly situation and flash reports go to: www.YouTube.com/FloridaSERT or join our blog at: <http://flsertinfo.blogspot.com/>.

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