

News Advisory



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Safety Warning

Extreme High Surf and Dangerous Conditions Expected along the California Coast

An intense storm system in the Central Pacific and located approximately 2,000 miles off the California coast is expected to generate an extremely large and dangerous surf in the coastal waters of California over the next four days. All Californians venturing out along the beaches and coastal areas should heed this warning and not put themselves or their family at risk!

West facing beaches along the California coast can expect a high surf that is very powerful due to the long period swell. Forecasted surf is expected to increase in size beginning the afternoon of Wednesday, March 9 with surf heights of 12-15 feet anticipated. Surf heights will continue to increase in many areas through Thursday, March 10 before gradually decreasing Friday, March 11.

This swell is forecasted to be an extremely large and powerful with wave periods between 17 – 20 seconds. “Park visitors may be fooled into thinking that the waterline is safer than it is due to long lulls between sets of waves,” said Alex Peabody, Aquatic Safety Specialist with the State Parks Public Safety Division. “Some of the most respected surf forecasters are calling this the “swell of the winter”.

“There are a number of factors coming together that may make this high surf period especially dangerous for the public,” says Peabody:

- 1.) Six foot high tides in the mornings on Thursday and Friday may create coastal erosion and flooding in low lying coastal areas that are open to the westerly swells. Inversely, low tides in the afternoon combined with the surf size and direction may cause breaking surf at harbor entrances making boating perilous.
- 2.) Due to the battering of the coastline from the storms in December, January, and February the ocean bottom is torn up along the coast and the public needs to be aware that strong rip currents are to be expected regardless of the size of the surf.

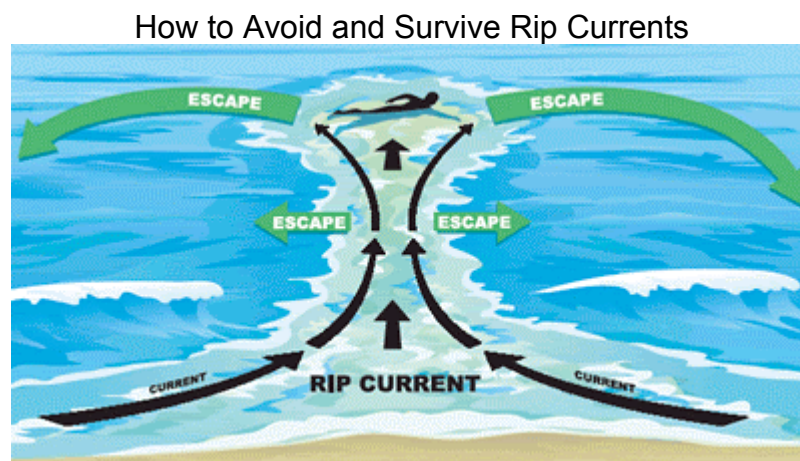
- 3.) Forecasted high pressure will produce beautiful weather along the coast, fooling the unknowing or inexperienced visitor to the beach into thinking the ocean is safe because of the weather.

Peabody cautions visitors to avoid exposed beach and rock areas close to the surf line. These areas can seem safe from most breaking waves, but the pattern of breaking waves produces a periodic sequence of large, very strong surges that can wash over rocks and beaches great distances and take visitors by surprise. Watch from a distance, not up close!

“In the interest of public safety, swimming, wading and water sports should be avoided. Popular surfing areas in our state parks may see extreme conditions to the point where even experts may be putting their lives at risk by entering the water. Certain state park areas may need to be closed due to the high surf. Please check your local state park office, or NOAA Weather Service for the updated information and local conditions,” said Peabody.

“Be preventative, and be safe out there,” he said.

The following information is provided courtesy of the United States Lifesaving Association, in partnership with [NOAA's National Weather Service](#)



- 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.**

For more information on rip currents go to: www.usla.org/ripcurrents

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