

News Advisory



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE	Alex Peabody	For information on Aquatic Safety in California State Parks, visit: www.parks.ca.gov/aquaticsafety
January 14, 2009	Aquatic Specialist Office: (831) 649-7132 Cell: (831) 402-7805	

Public Safety Warning

High Surf Expected along the California Coast

Visitors to the coastline of Central and Northern California are urged to be aware and use caution this coming weekend because of dangerous surf conditions now being forecast.

The combination of beautiful, sunny weather forecasted for California during the weekend and large oceanic swells predicted to reach the coastal waters of California beginning on Thursday afternoon through Sunday will create dangerous ocean conditions. The public is being warned to use caution if they are visiting the beach.

“This swell is forecasted to be large and powerful with wave periods between 16 – 20 seconds and wave heights at many west and north facing beaches of between 14 – 17 feet. The high energy surf will create strong, dangerous rip currents along the beaches. In anticipation of these dangers, some state parks and beaches may be closed to public,” said Alex Peabody, Aquatic Safety Specialist for California State Parks.

Surf forecasters have been monitoring the storm that created these swells and preparations have begun to hold the annual Mavericks surf contest off of Half Moon Bay, California. “During swells of this magnitude, even big wave experts can be challenged to the point where they are in danger. The longer periods between the swells means that the wave energy reaches deep into the water column, causing strong currents and making it difficult for lifeguards to reach someone in trouble in the surf zone,” said Peabody.

All along the California coastline, lifeguards and other public safety officials responsible for ocean safety take advantage of technology to reach those in distress. Many times, the use of motorized personal watercraft is the only means with which to reach those in trouble in the intense surf zones.

The public is being warned that surf heights will continue to remain high in many areas along the coast throughout the weekend.

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

- 1.) Mid-winter sunny skies and warm weather attracts large numbers of visitors to parks and beaches throughout California.
- 2.) The northwesterly angle from the storm will impact the coast of Central and Northern California and will produce large waves and powerful currents.
- 3.) Although the tides are not extreme, rip currents will be strongest during the outgoing tide in the late afternoon.

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!

If the wave forecast goes as scripted, conditions will look something like this:

- Thursday, January 15th: Surf for Central and Northern California is expected to increase in size beginning in the afternoon.
- Friday, January 16th: The swell is due to fill in completely through the day. Waves will quickly jump in size to wave heights of 14-17 feet at many surf breaks and beaches by the evening.
- Saturday, January 17th: The peak of the swell will arrive along the coast. Wave heights from 14 – 17 feet will continue to pound the beaches and deep water reefs.
- Sunday, January 18th: Some decrease in swell height through the day, but large waves of up to 12 feet will continue to produce dangerous conditions.

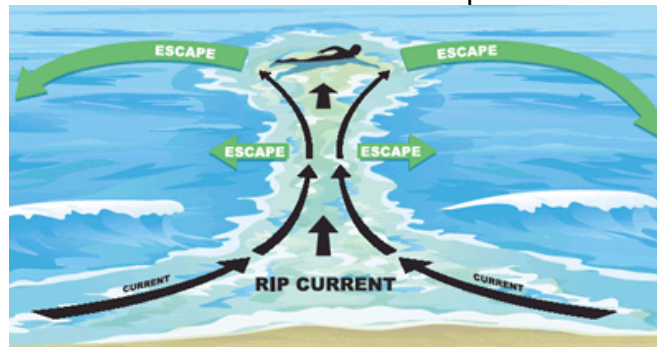
“In the interest of public safety, swimming, wading and water sports should be avoided at the height of this swell. Popular surfing areas in our state parks may see extreme conditions to the point where even experts will be at risk entering the water. Please check with your local state park office, or the National Weather Service for updated information and local conditions,” said Peabody.

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

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

How to Avoid and Survive Rip Currents



Learn how to swim!

- 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 and other public safety personnel.
- 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