

Hurricane Preparedness Week: May 3-9: Help Your Neighbors & Rip Currents

News Release Date

05-08-2020

Help Your Neighbor

Comprehensive preparedness requires the whole community to participate in hurricane preparedness. That said, many people, especially senior citizens, rely on the assistance of neighbors before and after hurricanes. Did you know that forty-six percent of individuals expect to rely a great deal on people in their neighborhood for assistance within the first 72 hours after a disaster? You can make a difference by getting involved in your community and acting today to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season!

The basic steps for helping your neighbor are easy. This week, be sure to help your neighbors collect the supplies they'll need before the storm. Then as storms approach, assist them with evacuation orders if ordered to do so. Then after the storm is over, be sure to check on your neighbors after it's safe for you to head outside.

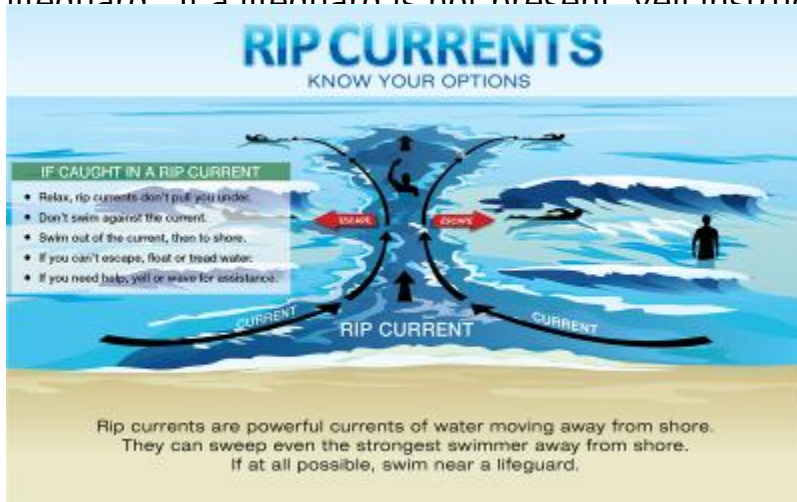
Rip Currents

Even when hurricanes stay out at sea, the North Carolina coast can still be impacted by large swells and deadly rip currents, thus making it important to stay aware of the tropics and weather forecasts all throughout the hurricane season. Rip currents are channelized currents of water flowing away from shore at surf beaches. Rip currents are quite common and can be found on many surf beaches every day. They typically form at breaks in sandbars, and also near structures such as jetties and piers. While the risk of rip currents occurring along the North Carolina beaches increases when a tropical cyclone is out in the Atlantic, the risk increases even more so when a tropical cyclone is moving toward the North Carolina coast, especially when the storm is a day or two away from making landfall along the Carolina coast.

Rip currents are dangerous because they can pull people away from shore. Rip current speeds can vary from moment to moment and can quickly increase to become dangerous to anyone

entering the surf. Rip currents can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea. Some clues that a rip current may be present include a channel of churning, choppy water, a difference in water color, a break in the incoming wave pattern, and a line of foam, seaweed or debris moving seaward.

If you find yourself caught in a rip current, stay calm and don't fight the current. Escape the current by swimming in a direction following the shoreline. When free of the current, swim at an angle—away from the current—toward shore. If you are unable to escape by swimming, float or tread water. When the current weakens, swim at an angle away from the current toward shore. If at any time you feel you will be unable to reach shore, draw attention to yourself: face the shore, call or wave for help. Also, don't become a victim while trying to help someone else! Many people have died in efforts to rescue rip current victims. Instead, get help from a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not present, yell instructions on how to escape. If possible, throw the lifeguard's rescue buoy for further assistance.



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