

"For safety's sake—do something."

Safety in the Water

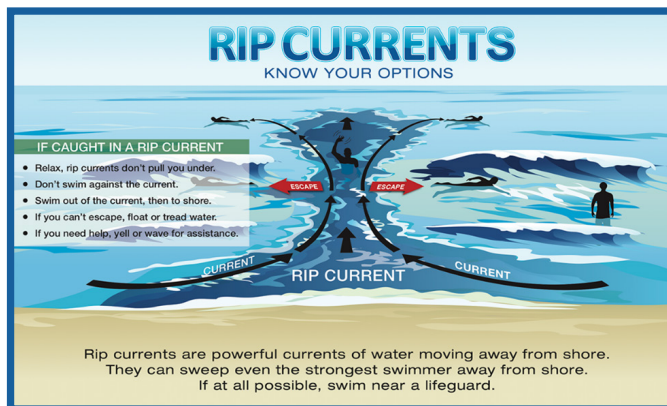
Great weather, picnics in the park, cookouts, and vacations. Yes, summertime is finally here and so is the summer heat. Many families will head to the nearest body of water whether that is a pool, lake, river, or ocean. If you find yourself, or your family, looking to head to the water to cool off this summer, please keep the following safety tips in mind.

Water safety

- Don't get into the water unless you know how to swim or wear a floatation device.
- Never swim alone.
- Don't dive in shallow water.
- Keep an eye on children at all times.
- Learn CPR.
- Wear a life jacket whenever you are in a boat.
- Avoid alcohol when swimming or boating.
- Don't underestimate the power of water. Even rivers and lakes can have undertows.
- If you get caught in a current, don't try to fight it; stay calm and float with it, or swim parallel to the shore until you can swim free.

Discussion points

- Have you ever been stuck in a rip current?
- How would you escape from a rip current?
- Can you identify a rip current?
- Rip currents can happen anywhere!



An SSOE employee recently experienced a rip current in Oregon.

My family went camping along the coast in Lincoln City. One day we were playing in the ocean. The kids were onshore, while the wife and I were taking turns playing in the waves boogie boarding. I am a strong swimmer, my wife is not. She had on a life vest with a whistle attached. She was out in the water, that was about waist / stomach deep playing in the "mid breakers" (not the big guys, but not the small ones either). I was onshore with my daughter reapplying sunscreen. My son comes running up to me screaming, "Mom needs help!" I scan the water and locate her out in the backline of breakers getting battered and struggling heavily. My wife had been sucked out in a rip current and was not able to fight the waves to come back in due to the tide receding.

I instantly react and tell my kids to stay onshore away from the waves. In my tunnel vision, I leave my life vest behind on the beach and go out to get her. By the time I get close to her, the side current really picks up and it's a fight to close the gap between me and her. At this point, the waves are well above my head and I'm having to duck under them to not get slammed. I was well out past where I can touch the bottom. I am quickly becoming fatigued due to the power of the water and the waves. I was starting to lose my breath due to the amount of time above the water before having to dive under the next wave. Out of breath, I finally reach my wife and latch onto her vest and board, so we don't get pulled apart. Together, we are able to power ourselves back onto shore. The way I was latched on, I was able to watch the waves and warn of how we needed to angle ourselves and hold our breaths when we were about to be collapsed upon. When we got to shore, we found that some of the bystanders had called for rescue and kept an eye on our children to make sure they stayed safe. Rescue arrived about five minutes after we were out of the water.

My wife did everything right. She had her life vest on with a whistle to alert people she was in trouble. The safety equipment most definitely is what saved her life. My lack of safety equipment almost cost me mine. Had I not reached her when I did, I don't know how much longer I would have been able to last due to lack of being able to get a good breath of air. I don't know if rescue would have made it in time for my wife, but I know for a fact I would not have lasted long enough for them to get me. We got super lucky in surviving this incident. Unfortunately, the next day, another woman from Salem was not.

**Safety Scott says,
"Safety always is
ALWAYS!"**