

Introduction

Your safety and enjoyment of beaches are affected by changes in tide and surf conditions. To minimize the risks of drowning or serious injury, Beach warning flags are flown in four colors accompanied by interpretive signs along the beach to explain the meaning of each color.

The flags are flown singly, or in pairs as the conditions warrant. For instance, a purple or blue flag and a green flag mean the water is calm, but marine pests are present. Other two flag combinations might be blue and yellow (marine pests present with moderate surf), or blue and red (marine pests present with high surf). When Lifeguards fly the red flag, that means absolutely No Swimming!

While the beach flags provide general warnings about overall surf conditions, they do not specifically advise the public of the presence of rip currents. Increasing public safety and awareness of natural conditions which pose a significant risk at the beach, such as rip currents, some also post **Rip Current Educational signs**. These signs are posted on Lifeguard towers, beach toll booths, beachside parks and other locations.

Rip Currents

Rip currents are powerful, narrow channels of fast-moving water, prevalent along the East, Gulf, and West coasts of the U.S., as well as along the shores of the Great Lakes.

Moving at speeds of up to eight feet per second, rip currents can move faster than an Olympic swimmer. Panicked swimmers often try to counter a rip current by swimming straight back to shore—putting themselves at risk of drowning because of fatigue.

If caught in a rip current, don't fight it! Swim parallel to the shore and swim back to land at an angle.

While the terms are often confused, **rip currents are different than rip tides**.

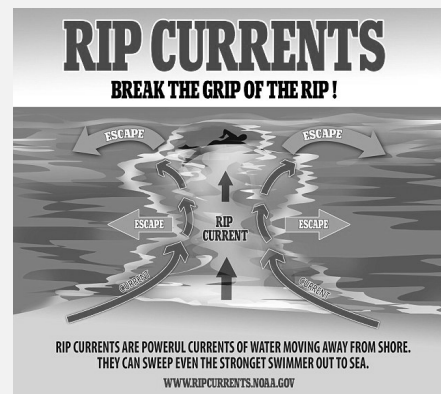
Rip tide is a specific type of current associated with the swift movement of tidal water through inlets and the mouths of estuaries, embayments, and harbors.

Flag Colors

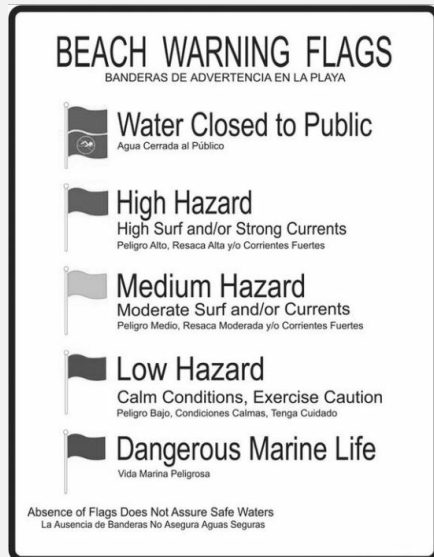
Color Meaning

Red	high hazard, strong waves and currents, high surf, the risk for rip currents is high
Yellow	medium hazard, higher waves, so be careful while swimming
Green	low hazard, calm conditions, exercise normal caution for swimming
Purple or Blue	marine pests are present, these could be jellyfish, algae, or other marine life such as sharks or stingrays, use caution while swimming

Escaping Rip Tide Current



Beach Flags



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Published 29th November, 2016.
Last updated 29th November, 2016.
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