

MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE BY EDITORS

READING THIS MAY SAVE YOUR LIFE AND THE LIVES OF YOUR LOVED ONES

Lifesaving South Africa is aware of the high increase in drowning during the festive season and has compiled a list of drowning prevention/ water safety tips in an effort to educate our South African public about water safety in the oceans, rivers and dams.

Beachgoers, urban and rural community members are urged to take heed of these water safety tips and pass them onto family and friends as it may save a life.

Surf/ Beach Water Safety Tips:

Rip Currents/ Rip Tides

Beachgoers need to understand and avoid Rip Currents and other dangerous swimming areas in the Surf especially after and during stormy weather. Rip currents are hidden deep spots in the surf which are hazardous – especially for small children. Waves are powerful and dig holes in the bottom of the sand bed near the shore and these holes may be several yards wide. Unless one swims very well, one should not try to reach the sand bar offshore. Rip currents are the leading surf hazard for all beachgoers. They are particularly dangerous for weak or non-swimmers and are the major cause of drowning in the surf.

How to Identify Rip Currents/ Rip Tides:

Look for any of these clues:

- A channel of churning, choppy water
- An area having a notable difference in water color
- A line of foam, seaweed, or debris moving steadily seaward
- A break in the incoming wave pattern

How to Avoid and Survive Rip Currents - Learn how to swim!

- 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 emergency. Throw the rip current victim something that floats and yell instructions on how to escape. Do not swim out to the victim if you are not a strong swimmer as many people drown while trying to save someone else from a rip current.

More/....

Swim Between the Flags

- Always Swim between the **Red** and **Yellow** Flags.
- Only swim where Lifeguards are on duty - Most drownings occur in unmanned beaches, **Remember if we can't see you we can't save you!**
- These flags are usually flown by lifeguards along the beachfront or in strategically placed areas.

River Water Safety Tips

- Check the strength of the current by throwing a small twig into the water (remember the current is stronger on the outside of bends)
- If you get caught in a current, float on your back with your feet downstream. Angle yourself to the shore
- Submerged objects can be very dangerous. Always enter the water feet first
- River conditions can change rapidly from heavy rainfall or release of water from storage areas.

Lakes and Dams Safety Tips

- Cold water in lakes and dams can cause distress. The water below the surface is often colder than you expect. This sudden reduction in temperature can cause shock and lack of mobility. If this happens get out of the water immediately.
- The bottom of lakes and dams can be soft, uneven and changeable. Be careful of submerged object and always enter the water feet first.
- Lakes and dams are open expanses of water. A rising wind can suddenly cause choppy waves that make it dangerous to swim

Alcohol Abuse

- Alcohol abuse is known to be the prime cause of aquatic/drowning disasters
- **SWIMMING and ALCOHOL DO NOT MIX.**

Lifesaving South Africa has embarked on a Water Safety Programme in rural areas to educate and teach disadvantaged communities water safety skills and we will continue to do our best to educate our communities as well as to keep all South African beaches, rivers and dams drown-free zones.

ENDS.

Issued by: Miss Nelanjini Govender - Operations & Marketing Manager - Lifesaving SA
Ph.: 031-3129215 Fax: 031-3125612
E-Mail: marketing@lifesaving.co.za