

# SAFETY SYSTEMS HAWAII, INC.

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67 Waiale Road  
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## Safety Awareness Sheet

### Water Safety & Awareness

In all of the US, Hawai'i is the only state that is completely and thoroughly surrounded by water. A favored tourist destination known the world over, and home of some of the best beaches on the planet. Hundreds upon thousands of people visit the sandy reaches of these islands with little thought to the dangers that exist upon our idyllic shores. According to the department of health, more than 38 people drown in Hawaii each year. Every year, between 800 and 1,000 people are rescued from the waters around Oahu.



First, when visiting any beach, look for any signs, posted warnings or flags. Several hazards await and may not be noticed until you reach the beach. Jellyfish, underwater geography, and dangerous currents as well as turtles laying eggs and sunning monk seals have specific signs which should be heeded.



Look for lifeguards and ask them if there is anything about the beach that you should know about. If no lifeguard is present, you may still enter the waters, but at your own risk. NEVER swim alone! Even longtime residents are sometimes caught unawares by underlying currents and rip tides.



### Swimming and Shore Play

- Sunblock helps to protect your skin. A good waterproof sunblock with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) at a minimum of 15 is always best.
- Swim in areas where lifeguards can see you. If there is no lifeguard, you swim at your own risk.
- Face the waves instead of turning your back to them. This way you know what is coming at you.
- Do not swim close to piers or docks. The water may move suddenly and you could hit an underwater piling or rock foundation.
- Wear foot protection if the area is rocky. Lava-rock cuts just as well as coral. Tobbies are perfect as they do not slip from your foot. Flip-flops are actually more dangerous.
- Wear goggles if your eyes are sensitive. Although there is no chlorine (as with pools), some people are not used to the saline content found in Hawaiian waters.
- Do not swim in the dark. Your visibility is greatly reduced, as is your own sight.

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## *Safety Awareness Sheet*

### **Surfing Safety (long board, boogie board, and windsurfers)**



- Let someone know which area you will be surfing.
  - Leash your board so it will not become a hazard to others.
  - When you wipe out, come back up hands first in case the board is flopping around above you.
- Carry your board flat when entering the water to prevent the wind or waves from catching it.
- One wave, one rider is the general rule. However that may not always be the case. Be courteous to your fellow wave riders and NEVER cut off another surfer.



- Call out which direction you will be going when dropping in on a wave (left or right). This will alert others on the wave and they should move for you.
- Duck-dive when possible. Only abandon your board if no one else is around.
- Pay attention to the weather, waves and other people. Quick weather changes, sneak-sets and the whereabouts of surfers and swimmers alike is important to good safety.



### **Open-Ocean Kayaking and Canoeing**

- Always plan your outing. Let someone who is not going know these plans and your approximate time of return.
- Pay attention to the weather, particularly wind direction. Paddling out with the wind means a harder return when against it.
- Know your own limits. Do not push or over-exert yourself. This can lead to exhaustion which is the number one killer in open water.
- Inspect and check your gear before heading out. Make sure hulls are not cracked and paddles are sturdy



- Always have signaling devices with you, in case you are stranded or too far out. Reflective mirrors, retro reflective tapes, strobe lights, whistles, air-horns, and a cellular phone are always good to have. If you will be paddling out of your cellular phone's area, a VHF marine transmitter or radio is the next best thing.
- Wear light, bright, breathable clothing.
- Stay away from commercial vessels and their shipping lanes, especially in limited visibility.
- Always have a flotation device handy for emergencies.



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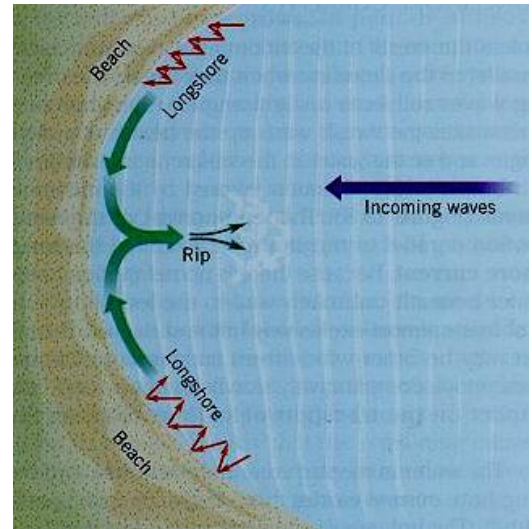
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## Safety Awareness Sheet

### Rip Tide, Under Tow and Rip Current

Rip tides can occur on any beach at any given time. Determined by the underwater geography, wind direction, and wave direction – rip tides can catch even the strongest swimmers unawares. If caught in one...

- **Remain Calm, do not panic.** Panicking will only tire you out quickly. Try to remain calm and stay afloat by slowly treading water.
- **Go with the flow.** Even strong swimmers would tire quickly trying to swim against a rip tide. Again, just slowly tread water and stay afloat.
- **Wait until the current releases you.** Rip currents die out in deeper water. Once you feel you are out of the current, start to swim.
- **Swim parallel to shore and then make your way in.** If you get tired, slowly tread water and preserve your strength. If you can whistle, do so as shrill noises carry farther over water than yelling.



Many people may mistake the undertow of wave action for a rip tide. The undertow is the backwash of a wave along the sandy bottom of the shore. After a wave breaks and runs up the beach face, some of the water is absorbed into the sand, but much of it flows back down the beach face creating a thin layer of offshore-moving water at a relatively high speed. This backwash can trip small children and carry them seaward. However, the next incoming wave is moving in a bit faster than the backwash, which will push that child back up on the beach. Undertow does not pull you under water or out to sea.

Rip currents are not rip tides and are not found on beaches themselves. Rip currents are caused by the tide as it moves in and out of inlets, estuaries, bays and harbors. These currents may cause drowning deaths, but these tidal currents or tidal jets are separate and distinct phenomena from rip currents. Recommended terms for these phenomena include *ebb jet*, *flood jet*, or *tidal jet*.

### Sources

United States Coast Guard [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)  
American Red Cross [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)  
Hawaii Civil Defense <http://www.scd.state.hi.us/>  
Hawaii Department of Health <http://www.hawaii.gov/health/>