

# Ocean Awareness Series

## Ho-Hum Beach: Bellport Village, NY



## **Beach Overview:**

- a. Flags: Used to display beach conditions and mark the swim area
  - i. Green: Calm surf with little danger
  - ii. Yellow: Rough surf: caution should be used. Weaker swimmers should only go up to their knees
  - iii. Red: Rough and dangerous surf: Only strong swimmers should consider going in
  - iv. Red No Swimming: Rough and dangerous surf, no one should enter the water: Tropical Storms and Hurricanes
    - 1. Hazards floating in the water: Building and dock debris
  - v. Swim within the defined Lifeguarded area
  - vi. Lifeguards are not responsible for patrons that choose not to obey the defined swim area marked on either side by red flags and corresponding signs
    - 1. Lifeguards will try to rescue people outside the swim area if they are made aware of a situation, but the odds decrease significantly the further down the beach a person is.
- b. Know your swimming ability and don't overestimate it.
- c. Don't swim in channels or inlets as even experienced swimmers can't beat the currents.
- d. When in the water, don't wave to people on shore as that can be seen by the Lifeguards as a call for help
- e. Ho-Hum is surrounded by wilderness, help is not nearby
- f. Emergency response is either by 4WD, Rescue boat on the Bay or by Helicopter
- g. Role of the patron: Shared responsibility

### **Red Flags**

The most serious of all beach warning flags, red flags warn swimmers of severe hazards in the water. One red flag means that the surf is high or there are dangerous currents or both. Though you can still swim if there is a red flag, you should use extreme caution and go in the water only if you're a keen swimmer.

Two red flags, however, means that the water is closed to swimming, as conditions are too dangerous for even the strongest swimmers. In some communities, red flags feature the symbol of a swimmer with a white line through it, indicating that swimming is prohibited.

### **Yellow Flags**

When ocean conditions are rough, but not life-threatening, you might see a yellow flag on the beach. A yellow flag indicates potentially high surf or dangerous currents and undertows and means that swimmers should exercise extreme caution. If there is a yellow flag, swim only near lifeguards and heed all lifeguard warnings.

If you're swimming with children, or you aren't a strong swimmer yourself, wear a life jacket when swimming on yellow-flag days. Some beaches have a permanent yellow flag because of rocks, a sudden drop-off or a high population of bait fish that attracts predators.

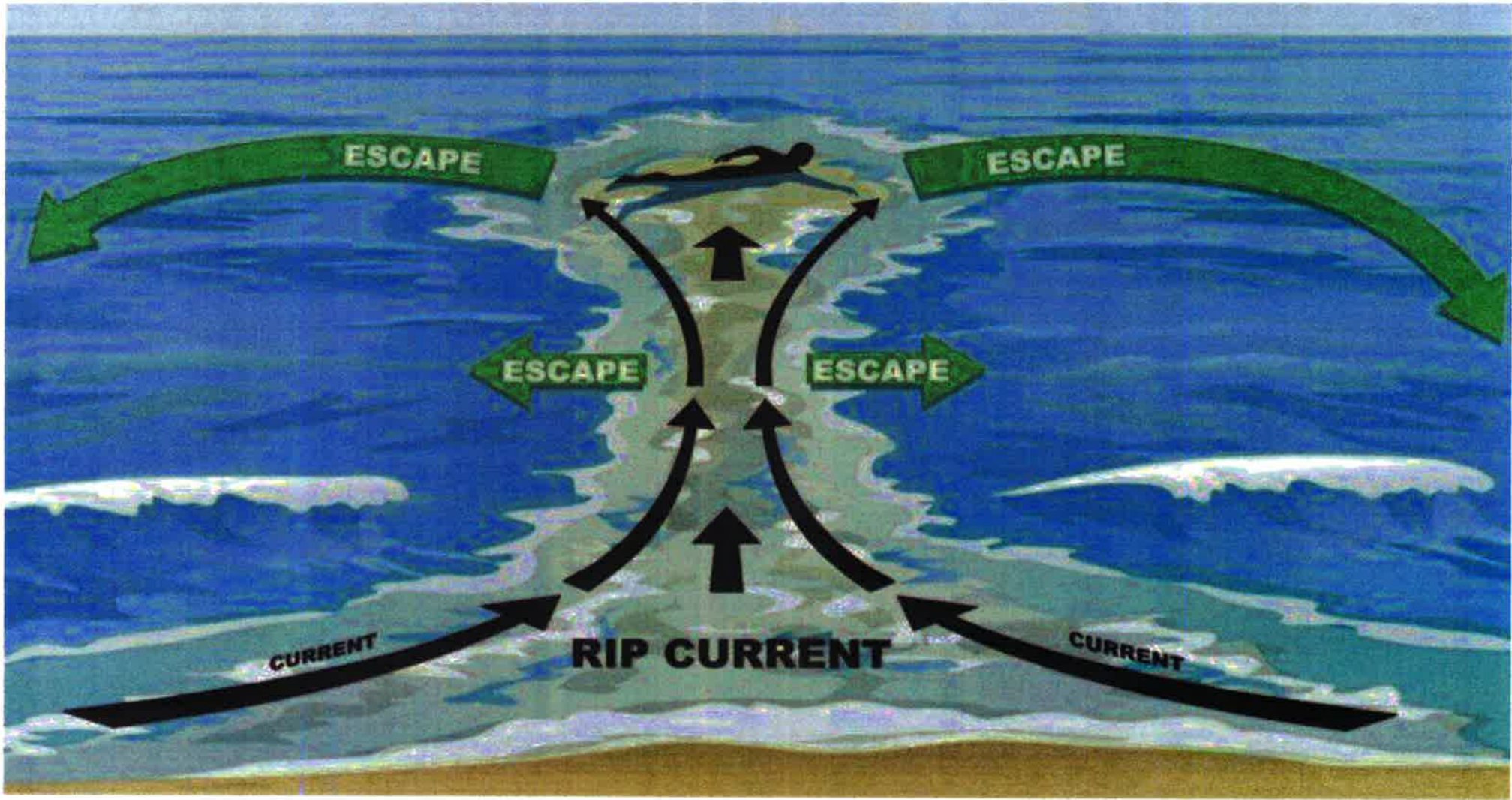
### **Green Flags**

The ocean is always unpredictable, and even on clear and calm days, hazards still exist. However, there are days when the threat of danger is lower than others. A green flag on the beach is an all-clear sign, indicating that it's safe to swim. Even when the flag is green, make sure to exercise caution in the ocean, listen to lifeguard warnings and keep a close eye on children.

## **Understanding Ocean Conditions and How to React**

**Rip Currents**: typically form when the surf is somewhat rough. Waves that hit the shore need to drain back out

- i. The Rip can form in little gulley's or depressions in the sand
- ii. Typically a source of curiosity for kids
- iii. A weak swimmer can get sucked out quickly and pulled out far
- iv. Swimmers in the water can get caught in a rip current and not even know that they are in trouble
- v. Do not attempt to swim directly to shore, the current is too strong
  1. Swim parallel to shore and try to move diagonally in.
  2. Call or signal to a Lifeguard for help
- vi. From the shore look for a white churned up water in the shape of a mushroom
- vii. Rip currents typically can move along the shore









**Sweep**: This is important as swimmers in the water will move with the sweep and end up outside the swim area.

- i. To maximize swimming enjoyment and safety, try to stay in front of the Lifeguard tower

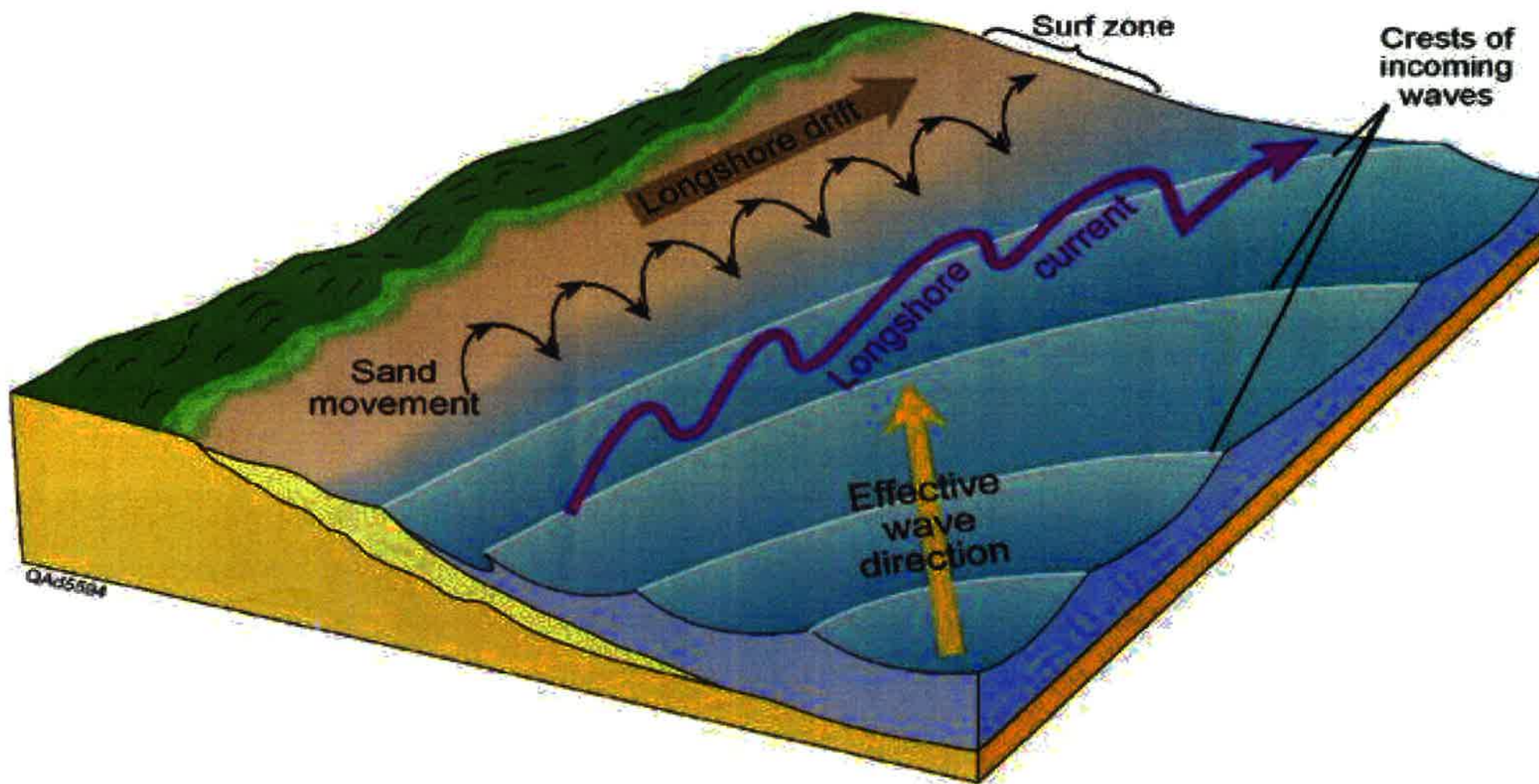
Longshore currents are common at any beach that is exposed to breaking surf. A longshore current is an ocean current that moves parallel to shore. It is caused by large swells sweeping into the shoreline at an angle and pushing water down the length of the beach in one direction. Longshore currents usually extend from the shallow waters inside the breaking waves to breaking waves on the outside. They vary depending on the size, strength, and direction of the approaching swell, and the length of the beach. The more prominent the swell size and direction, and the longer and straighter the beach is, the more powerful and swift the longshore current will be. They are responsible for many rescues along the coast by sweeping swimmers and surfers down the beach into a variety of hazards. They also have a large impact on the shoreline.

## Why are longshore currents dangerous?

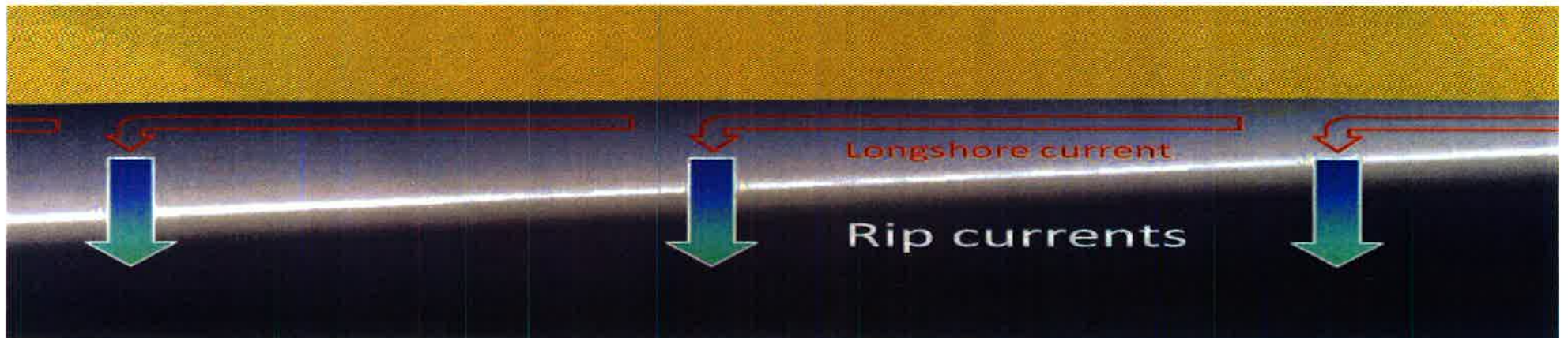
Longshore currents can sweep swimmers and surfers into rip currents, piers, jetties, and other hazardous areas. In many cases, the longshore current is strong enough to prevent swimmers from being able to keep their feet on the bottom, making it difficult to return to shore.

Always check with the lifeguard on-duty before you enter the ocean to consider the direction and strength of the longshore current and the possible hazards you may be swept into.



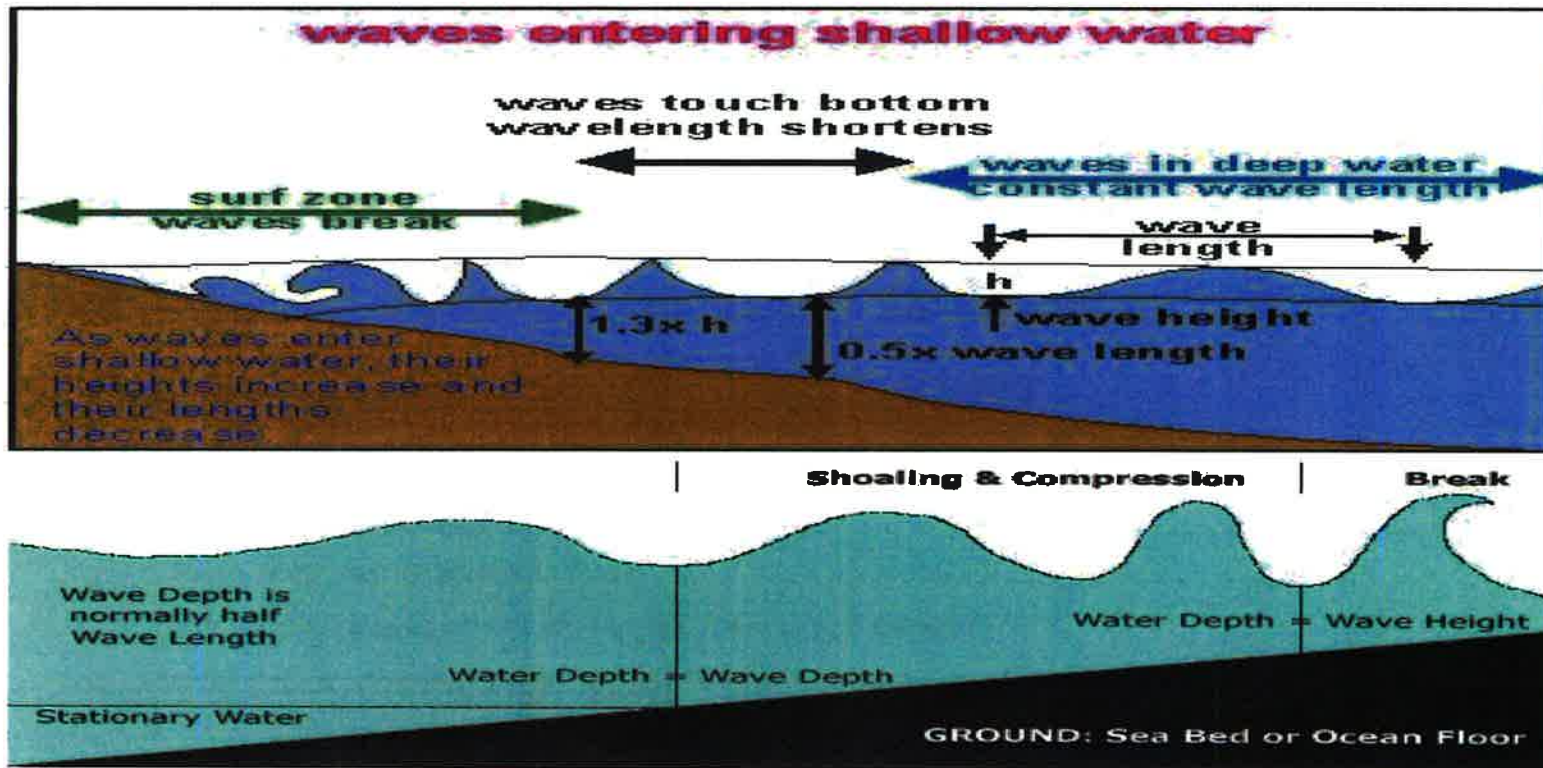


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- a. **Wave conditions:** Body surfing is a fun activity at the ocean
- i. Be careful and understand the wave height and power
  - ii. Waves crashing straight down can be a big danger for head, back and neck injuries: Don't go over the falls
  - iii. In big surf, getting into the water can in many cases be easier than getting out



## Tired and distressed swimmers

- i. Key thing for a tired or distressed swimmers is not to panic
- ii. Try to keep your senses and relax
- iii. Try to tread water or float
- iv. A panicked swimmer begins to have trouble breathing effeciently
- v. Get the attention of the lifeguard if they have not recognized the situation

	Distressed Swimmer	Drowning Victim-Active	Drowning Victim-Passive
Head Position	Above water	Tilted back with face looking up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Face-up or face-down in the water</li> <li>■ Submerged</li> </ul>
Appearance and, if visible, Facial Expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Trying to support self by holding or clinging to a lane line or safety line</li> <li>■ Expression of concern for personal safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Struggling to keep or get the head above the surface of the water</li> <li>■ Struggling to reach the surface, if underwater</li> <li>■ Expression of panic/ wide eyed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Limp or convulsive-like movements</li> <li>● Floating or submerged</li> <li>■ Eyes may be closed</li> <li>■ If submerged, may look like a shadow</li> </ul>
Breathing	Is breathing	Struggles to breathe	Not breathing
Arm and Leg Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Floating, sculling or treading water</li> <li>■ Might wave for help</li> </ul>	Arms to sides or in front, alternately moving up and pressing down	None
Body Position	Horizontal, vertical or diagonal, depending on means of support	Vertical, leaning slightly back	Horizontal or vertical
Locomotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Little or no forward progress</li> <li>■ Legs and less able to support self</li> </ul>	None	None
Sounds	Able to call for help but may not do so	Cannot call out for help	None
Location	At the surface	At the surface, underwater or sinking	Floating at the surface, sinking or submerged on the bottom



# Rescue Equipment

- i. Torpedo Bouy (Torp): The most basic and important piece of rescue equipment a Lifeguard has
  - 1. The Lifeguard should always take a torp with them on a rescue
- ii. Yoke Bucket: Coiled line that a Lifeguard can swim out to a victim and along with a Lifeguard with a torp and lock them up and have a guard on shore pull them in. Used in rip current conditions
- iii. Rescue Surfboard
- iv. Backboard
- v. O2 bag
- vi. AED
- vii. Narcan



### *Use of accessories and prohibited items:*

- a. Umbrellas: Makes for a comfortable beach visit
- b. Lifeguards cannot see through umbrellas
- c. Umbrellas and blankets should not be placed directly in front of the Lifeguard tower
- d. Umbrella line should be parallel to the middle of the Lifeguard tower
- e. Prohibited items:
  - i. Facemasks are not allowed, but goggles are ok
  - ii. Inner-Tubes are not a safe floatation device as three things can happen
    - 1. The tube can deflate
    - 2. The user can fall through the tube
    - 3. The user can be thrown down by the wave
  - iii. Fishing Pole should not be used within 200 feet of the marked swim area
    - 1. Always fish down sweep so that the hook does not float into the swim area



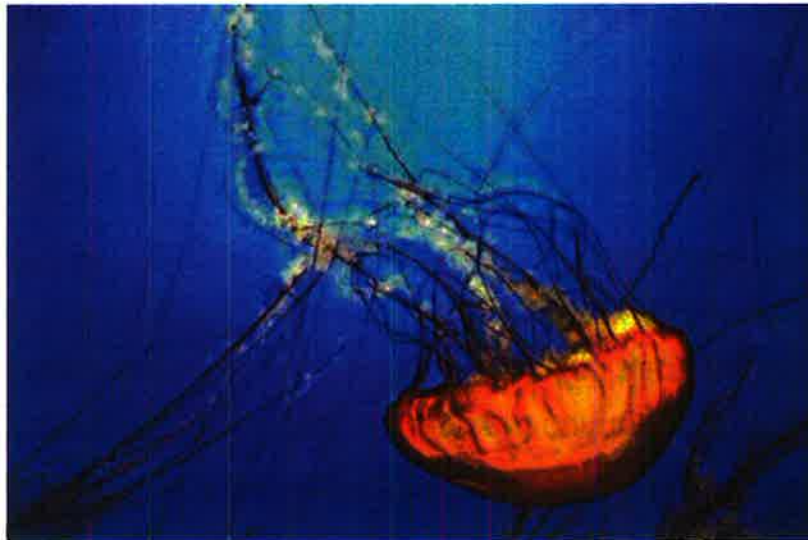
## **Beach hazards:**

- a. Alcohol: Use of alcohol and lack of food can lead to dehydration
- b. For maximum safety, alcohol should not be used during a day at the beach
- c. Diving into shallow water is a cause of head neck and back injuries
- d. People that have been drinking are typically the victims of these types of injuries
- e. Active vs Passive drowning with passive drowning also related to drinking and/or drugs



## **Natural Hazards**

- a. Jellyfish: Typically the anticipation of a sting is worse than the sting itself
  - i. Jellyfish season typically occurs in early to mid-August
  - ii. First Aid for Jellyfish is vinegar
  - iii. Fresh water can make the sting worse
  - iv. Contrary to common folklore, rubbing alcohol and urine are not effective in treating jellyfish stings.





## **Sharks**

- i. Shark sightings are rare, but they do happen
- ii. Seems to parallel Shark Week on Discovery Channel
- iii. If a shark is sighted, the Lifeguards will clear the water for 30 minutes



## **Thunder & Lightning**

- i. If thunder is heard or lightning is spotted, the Lifeguards will clear the water for 45 minutes.
- ii. While many would consider this a common sense item, many people are not aware that being in the water is one of the worst places you can be during a thunder and lightning storm



## **Green Flies:**

Green flies tend to frequent the beach when the wind is out of the North.

- i. While not considered dangerous, they are a major nuisance.
  - 1. The best repellent is Listerine
  - 2. Listerine however is not very effective with black flies



