Rip Current Safety Fatality File

Man dies swimming in ocean while on vacation; family says rip currents to blame.

OAK ISLAND, N.C. (WECT/Gray News) – A family is trying to recover after losing a loved one while vacationing in North Carolina over Memorial Day weekend.

WECT reports Jacob Martin, 36, was visiting Oak Island with his family when suddenly their weekend trip took a tragic turn.

Oak Island Water Rescue reports rescuers got a call on May 28 about a man struggling in the water. When crews arrived at the scene, rescuers said nurses, who happened to be on the beach, had already started CPR on Martin, and a witness had pulled him out of the water.

However, even with the help of the good Samaritans, Martin did not survive.

Martin's mother, Katrina Thornburg, said she spent weeks planning the family trip, and Martin drove from West Virginia with his kids to take part in it.

"We got here Friday night, and I took videos. The family was cooking and singing," she said. "I'm still in shock; I don't know how to process it."

Yellow flags were flying at the beach at Oak Island on Saturday due to the moderate risk for rip currents, and Martin's mother said she believes that's what took his life.

"He could swim, and no one even really thought about it," she said. "So, it is very dangerous, and it is a real threat. You need

to take it seriously.”

Ocean Rescue Chief Pete Grendze couldn’t confirm if a rip current caused Martin’s death but said an autopsy had been scheduled.