Rip Current Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Rip currents are powerful and fast-moving channels of water that can pull swimmers away from the shore. The speed of the current can range from several feet per second to faster than an Olympic swimmer.
2. When caught in a rip current, swimmers may feel a strong pull and find themselves unable to make progress toward the shore. This can lead to exhaustion as they struggle against the current. Panic may set in, further depleting their energy and impairing judgment.
3. Rip currents can carry swimmers several hundred feet away from the shore, making it challenging for them to return safely. Being far from shore increases the risk of fatigue, disorientation, and being unable to signal for help.
4. Rip currents can carry swimmers into areas with submerged obstacles such as rocks, coral reefs, or jetties. Collisions with these objects can result in injuries, including cuts, bruises, or even fractures.
5. Swimmers who lack proper swimming skills or are unfamiliar with ocean conditions may be particularly vulnerable to the dangers of rip currents. Inexperienced individuals may struggle to navigate the current or may panic, exacerbating the risks.

STATS

- According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), rip currents are responsible for an estimated 100 deaths each year in the U.S.
- Rip currents are a significant cause of drowning incidents worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), drowning accounts for an estimated 320,000 deaths annually,

with a substantial portion attributed to incidents involving rip currents.

- Rips are believed to be responsible for a majority of rescues and fatalities on beaches around the world. In Canada alone, it is estimated that 80% of all drownings and rescues are associated with rips.
- In the United States, rip currents cause an average of 46 deaths each year, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). However, the number of non-fatal rip current incidents is much higher, and the actual occurrence of rip currents is believed to be underreported.
- According to the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA), rip currents are responsible for an estimated 80% of rescues performed by surf beach lifeguards in the United States.
- The number of rip current rescues performed by lifeguards can significantly exceed the number of fatalities. In the U.S., lifeguards conduct tens of thousands of rip current rescues annually, emphasizing the importance of their presence and intervention.