



**OKALOOSA COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
CRIME PREVENTION
UNIT
TIP OF THE WEEK!**



Safety Tips while Swimming in the Emerald Coast Waters

The gulf is a wonderful place to swim - if you are careful. Swimming in the gulf is not the same as swimming in a pool or lake. Wind, waves, the change of the tide, the slope of the beach and other factors can cause strong currents to be present in the water even on the calmest days. The Gulf of Mexico conditions can change from day to day and from hour to hour. Rip current form when the sand bar breaks and the trapped water funnels out to the sea through the break; sometimes sweeping swimmers with it.

- Use lifeguarded beaches during summer months. Scheduled hours of lifeguarded beaches may vary.
- Non-swimmers should use Coast Guard-approved flotation vests, even while wading.
- Do not swim in the gulf alone - take a buddy with you.
- Stay Sober - don't swim while intoxicated. Alcohol can affect your judgement and your body temperature - impairing your ability to swim.
- Don't swim during rough seas. Broken necks and paralysis have resulted from swimmers being thrown into the gulf's bottom headfirst.
- The force of big waves crashing at the shore's edge can pick you up and throw you into the sand. This may result in a dislocated shoulder or knee.
- Due to dangerous currents, **never** swim in the inlets.
- Do not swim at night or near fishing piers.
- Children should swim only with adult supervision.
- Know the various types of gulf currents and how to get out of them.
- The most important thing to remember if you're caught in a rip current is: **DON'T SWIM AGAINST THE CURRENT!** Instead, swim across the current, parallel to the shore, slowly working your way back to the beach at an angle. Above all, remain calm. Signal for help if you need it.
- Watch the weather. Storms and squalls come up quickly.
- Don't swim during thunderstorms; lightening is extremely dangerous and does strike the beach.
- Don't wear shiny objects when swimming - these objects may attract sharks and other fish.
- Watch for jellyfish. If stung, seek first aid if needed. Don't rub sand on the stings. Spraying or pouring vinegar on the sting site often reduces the pain. If you don't have vinegar, try ammonia or denatured alcohol.
- Do not swim near surfers - surfboard fins can cut you.

If you have any more questions please contact Ashley Bailey at (850) 259-0031 or Elizabeth Bingham at (850)651-7410 ext. 1227.