

AQUATIC SAFETY RESEARCH GROUP, LLC

EDUCATION, TRAINING, CONSULTING AND EXPERT WITNESS SERVICES

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SEVEN SIMPLE SAFETY TIPS FOR BEACH MANAGERS

BY TOM GRIFFITHS, ED.D.

1. CHANNEL ACCESS TO THE BEACH TO EDUCATE AND WARN.

Although guests enjoy easy and convenient access to the beach, they should be directed to access points that are used to educate and warn. This is much easier and cheaper than you might expect and is vitally important to their safety.

2. STREAMLINE SIGNAGE.

Emphasize Dangers and Warnings at the beach. Minimize and relocate directional, informational and housekeeping signage. Eliminate unimportant signage. Use the best shapes and colors to create appropriate themes. For Dangers, Warnings and Hazards, mimic highway signs.

3. PRACTICE ACTIVE SUPERVISION RATHER THAN PASSIVE SUPERVISION.

The problem with many water safety efforts is that they are too passive, that is, supervisors simply sit back, watching and waiting for problems to arise rather than speaking with guests in order to educate, warn and ultimately prevent accidents. We must practice *proactive prevention* rather than perform reactive rescues.

4. DEMAND THAT PARENTS WATCH THEIR CHILDREN CLOSELY.

It only takes seconds for a child to drown and if parents are more than an arm's length away, they've gone too far. The #1 problem at beaches is lost children. Consider developing a safe, colorful meeting place for families to combat lost children but be certain to staff the area to help protect against child abduction.

5. WARN GUESTS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF HEAD-FIRST ENTRIES.

Two-thirds of all catastrophic neck injuries occur in open-water areas, *not* swimming pools. And no, the sand under the water is not soft and forgiving of misguided headers! Please remember that a guest can become a quadriplegic in just less than two seconds at your beach.

6. WARN GUESTS ABOUT STRONG WAVES AND CURRENTS.

Yes, your beach is beautiful but dangerous as well. "Surf's up!" is often bad news for guests. Big waves and strong currents can be real killers. Approximately 80% of all ocean drownings are caused by rip currents. Your guests need to know this. At flat-water beaches, warn of poor visibility and hidden underwater hazards such as sink holes, sudden drops-offs, rocks and weeds.

7. USE THE NEW BEACH FLAG SYSTEM.

A universal flag warning system is a significant safety move in the right direction for surf beaches. Remember, though, that flags alone cannot safeguard the beach. Support the flags with active patrols and lifeguards. You *can* make a difference by being proactive.



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