

Community comment – 3 minutes

~~a community comment~~  
on behalf of

This is Troy Nicolini with the National Weather Service with a message from the Water Safety Coalition. for C.C.

The recent tragedy at Big Lagoon Beach leaves us all grieving for the affected family and feeling a great loss to the community. Sadly these tragedies happen almost every year and each time we collectively ask ourselves: What can we do to stop the ocean from taking our loved ones.

The Water Safety Coalition would like to offer hope for the future in the form of water safety knowledge. If we can get this message to everyone in the region, including visitors, then we can have a future that is free of these tragic deaths.

First of all, **Choose your beach well.** Steep beaches like those at Big Lagoon, Dry Lagoon, Stone Lagoon, and Freshwater Lagoon are particularly dangerous because the force of the ocean waves can reach much farther up the beach and pull you into the surf. Steep beaches also have courser sand that washes out from under your feet making it harder to resist being pulled into the water. For these reasons, avoid steep beaches, especially if you have children or dogs. Flatter beaches like those at Clam Beach and Moonstone beach are much better choices.

**Stay Back from the water, and Never turn your back on the ocean**

Don't be fooled by waves that look small. They can be small for up to twenty minutes before a big set of waves surprises you. The best approach is to stay further back from the water than you might think is necessary – definitely way above the wet sand line - and never turn your back on the ocean. For many activities, like walking on the beach, this is the best protection. But, if you have to be close to the water, and especially if you're going to be distracted, for example for surf fishing or agate hunting, wear a life vest.

**Don't go in after dogs** Dogs that are pulled into the surf almost always get out on their own...so stay on dry land and wait for them to get out. Of course it's better to keep them out of the water in the first place. Keeping them on a leash works, but if they are off lease then stay very far from the water and don't throw sticks or balls in the water for them. If you must have your dog in the ocean then put a dog life vest on them. They really do work and your dog can still run and play.

If a person is pulled into the water, don't go in the water after them. Remember that you will likely also get in trouble so that when rescuers do arrive they will have to divide their time between multiple victims. It's much better to call 911 and be prepared to guide rescuers to the person in trouble.

And lastly: **Share this message** .... with your family and especially children. And share it with friends and co-workers....and even engage perfect strangers if you see them doing something dangerous. Make beach safety awareness part of who we are on the north coast.

This has been Troy Nicolini for Community Comment