



WATER SAFETY

(This is a repeat article with some important additions which we felt would be timely for the end of the year. Have a happy and safe summer! The HCOE Health Team

We have the great advantage of living in such a spectacular place. We have the wonderful natural setting to enjoy, but we need to guarantee that we respect the setting we are in. The North Coast has lost too many people in the recent years due to drowning.

Drowning can occur in as little as 20 seconds for children and 60 seconds for an adult. Drowning is known as the “silent killer” because most victims slip beneath the water without a sound. Paying close attention to those around you can drastically reduce such accidents.

See the fascinating and informative article below: “Drowning Doesn’t Look Like Drowning” by Mario Vittone for [Slate.com](http://www.slate.com).

http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/family/2013/06/rescuing_drowning_children_how_to_know_when_someone_is_in_trouble_in_the.html?wpisrc=most_viral

RIVERS:

Rivers are hazardous because:

- The rivers’ speed and power increase tremendously as the flow increases. Just because you had a great swim at the same time last year does not mean that the conditions are exactly the same this year.
- Brush, fallen trees, undercut rocks or anything else which allows river currents to sweep through can pin swimmers against the obstacle. Water pressure on anyone trapped this way can be overwhelming. Rescue is often extremely difficult. Pinning may occur in fast currents, with little or no white water to warn of the danger.
- Underwater ledges and holes: When water drops over an obstacle, it curls back on itself, forming a strong upstream current which may be capable of

holding a swimmer. Despite their seemingly benign appearance, ledges and holes can create an almost escape-proof trap.

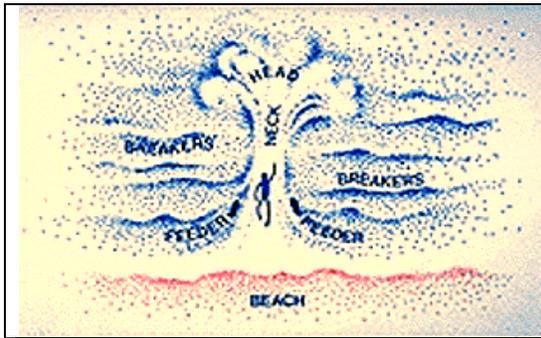
Planning for a safe river trip begins well before you get on the water and doesn't end until you return home. By following the steps and information listed below, you will better understand how to safely and comfortably enjoy the river.

- Wear your life jacket even when swimming. For free lifejacket loans, see the Humboldt County's Program: <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/HHS/PHB/LifejacketLoan.asp>
- Do not swim alone. Never swim or play on or near the water without a lifeguard or adult watching out for you. Swim with a buddy.
- Do not overestimate your swimming ability. Swimming becomes more difficult with increased current and water depth. Knowing how to swim, to float, and hold your breath under water are three skills that could save your life. It's never too late to learn or to improve your skills. (Find out more from the [American Red Cross](#).)
- Cold water and/or weather can cause hypothermia which can sap your strength. Spring flows are particularly cold and dangerous.
- Wear shoes to protect against glass and rocks. River rocks may be slippery.
- Guard against sunburn. Wear a hat and light clothing. Use a sunscreen with a high rating.
- Feet first --always climb down into the water on your first dip in to make sure the area is deep enough and safe for swimming. Then [play it safe](#) and jump—don't dive—into the water you've checked out. (Your feet can take a lot more pounding than your head. Protect your brain: Jump, don't dive)
- Remember new hazards are present each spring; a stretch of river that was safe in the fall may be dangerous in the following spring.
- Keep a close watch on children even if they are far from the water. They can quickly enter the water and get in trouble when your attention is diverted for only a moment.
- Bring an adequate water supply. Do not drink river or stream water.

COASTAL BEACHES

Beaches are hazardous because water accidents happen quickly. A person can be swept from the beach or jetty into cold water in an instant: Riptides (rip currents) can carry them out to sea.

- Always keep one eye on the water to detect large unexpected waves.
- Face the water when near the waves.
- Check the forecast for high surf advisory before going to the beach.
- Beware of the cold water; it can quickly sap your strength.
- Wear a life jacket when fishing or tide pooling because these activities require you to be very near the surf with your attention diverted.
- Be sure everyone recognizes a rip tide and knows what to do.



What's a Riptide? Actually, it's a current that has nothing to do with the tides. A rip current happens as water that's built up onshore returns to the open water (all those waves need to go somewhere!). Rip currents are often found near fixed objects, like piers and reefs, which is why these are "no swimming" areas. If you swim into a rip current (you'll feel it pulling you out to sea), don't panic. Swim parallel to shore until you feel the pull stop. You can then swim back to shore

If you are in trouble in the water, call or wave for help.

What can you do if someone is in trouble? Learn **REACH, THROW, DON'T GO!** These are the steps for civilian water rescue. **Immediately yell for help.**

Reach -- Reach first with a fishing pole, towel, boat oar, but don't get in the water yourself.

Throw – If you can't reach far enough, look around for a flotation device like a life ring, life jacket, cooler, or even an empty milk jug. Throw it to the person in the water so they can float and try to kick back to safety.

Don't Go -- If someone falls into the water, don't jump in after them to help. You could get pulled under and then both of you could be in trouble.

Learn to perform CPR (or cardio-pulmonary resuscitation). Check Red Cross CPR training programs. In an emergency, always have someone call 911.

Before you head to the beach or river, review these steps, and you, your friends and family will be safer.