

Beach Safety

When visiting the scenic Oregon coast and participating in recreational activities, safety should be a concern.

Tragic water accidents happen quickly. The most common reason for aquatic mishaps is a lack of safety knowledge. We recommend the following safety tips:

- Learn to swim.
- Never swim alone.
- Supervise children closely.
- Don't rely on flotation devices, such as rafts.
- If caught in a rip current, swim sideways until free. Don't swim against the current's pull.
- Alcohol and swimming, surfing, windsurfing or boating don't mix.
- Protect your head, neck and spine. Don't dive into unfamiliar waters.
- If you are in trouble, call or wave for help.
- Follow posted regulations.
- Swim parallel to shore if you wish to swim long distances.
- Scuba dive only if trained and certified -- and within the limits of your training.
- No glass containers at the beach -- broken glass and bare feet don't mix.
- No beach fires except in designated areas.
- Report hazardous conditions.
- Stay clear of coastal bluffs. They can collapse and cause injury.
- Never turn your back to the ocean. You may be swept off coastal bluffs or tide pool areas and into the water by waves that can come without warning.
- Do not climb up onto logs on the beach. While they look heavy and sturdy when climbing on them, the smallest wave will roll it over you or a child. Killer logs are real.
- Be aware of sneaker waves, even on the calmest days. Don't turn your back on the ocean and keep your eye on the surf. Avoid 'Killer Surf.'
- Have your beach access available to you at all times. A big wave can come right up to a seawall, leaving you no path for safety, getting you cold, wet and possibly swimming when you don't want to do any of the three.
- Stay on accessible high ground when storm-agitated surf is on the beach. Oregon State Parks maintains dozens of safe roadside parks and campground access points right along Highway 101 where you can get great photos of dramatic winter surf without endangering yourself.
- Dress for the weather. Layer your clothes to provide you warmth and comfort. And carry along your rain gear to keep you dry when it does drizzle.

Beware the sneaker wave

They're called sneaker waves because they appear without warning, often surging high up on the beach with deadly force, and are impossible to predict.

How to play it safe: Never turn your back on the ocean.

Watch those logs

The ocean is strong enough to pick up even the biggest log and plop it down on top of you. Some logs may look small, but even the tiny ones can be waterlogged and weigh tons.

How to play it safe: If you see a log in the surf or on wet sand, stay off it.

Look out for deep water & strong currents

The deeper the water, the greater the risk of falling victim to an undertow (the seaward pull of receding waves breaking onshore). These currents can swiftly sweep unwary beachcombers and waders off their feet and out to sea.

How to play it safe: Stay in shallow water.

Know the tides

Incoming tides isolate rocks from headlands and the shore. Avoid the temptation of strolling out to an interesting rock without knowing when the tide rolls back in. Free tide tables are readily available at state park offices, information centers and many shops and motels.

How to play it safe: Stay off rocks and small, enclosed beaches. Know when the tide is coming in by [downloading a tidetable](#) ([Acrobat](#) required) or by [visiting the tidetable website](#) at the Hatfield Marine Science Center.

Always assume high waves can reach you

Tides and waves can sweep over rocks, jetties and headlands, knocking you off and carrying you out to sea.

How to play it safe: Assume nothing is 'high enough' and avoid exposed rocks, jetties and headlands during strong wave action periods (like during and after storms).

Take care around high, steep cliffs

Assume that all cliff edges are unstable. Wet trails or soft sand and earth can make for unstable footing. Rocks can be slippery even when it isn't raining.

How to play it safe: Make sure you wear proper footwear, and stick to the trails. Stay behind guard fences and railings, and don't get too close to the edge.

Heads up

Standing at the base of an oceanside cliff can be dangerous, especially if it has an overhang. In some places, winter storms and high waves have eroded the shoreline, increasing the chance of collapsing landforms and slides.

How to play it safe: Beware of falling rocks, and don't climb on bluffs and eroding hillsides. Don't walk along the base of cliffs unless absolutely necessary.

Safety and Emergency Links

[American Red Cross](#)

[First Aid: HealthWorld Online](#)

[Oregon Emergency Management](#)

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