



A Lifeguard's Beach Safety Tips

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Special to the Dispatch

The writer is a 22-year veteran of the Beach patrol. In the off-season, he is an elementary school teacher in Montgomery County. The OCBP consist of over 200 men and women dedicated to ocean rescue and maintaining a safe and orderly environment on Ocean City's beach. The Surf Rescue Technicians guard the beach seven days a week from 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.



What to Bring to the Beach

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A trip to the beach is always better when you have everything you need. Taking the time to make sure you have everything will undoubtedly make your day at the beach more enjoyable.

First and foremost make sure you bring sun block and water. These two items are not only essential for a good beach day, but for your health. Bring plenty of water to make sure you stay hydrated all day. One trick that a lot of lifeguards use is freezing a container of water. The container will melt throughout the day and you will have cool water all day.

I cannot overstress the importance of wearing plenty of sun block. Severe sunburn is sure to put a damper on at least a few days of any vacation. Every summer we see cases of sunburn that are so severe medical treatment is required. The key is wearing a SPF 30 or higher and even more importantly reapplying frequently throughout the day. The most important tip to prevent a severe burn is to apply the first layer before you get dressed or venture outside, even those areas that you do not think will be exposed. Reapplication is key to making sure you are protected all day.

The beach patrol has pamphlets with charts that show how much a person should reapply based on the SPF. The chart is also located on the information sign on the back of every guard stand. However, everyone is different and so is his or her skin type. These are factors to consider when applying sun block.

While on vacation also make sure you have any medications that you might need throughout the day, especially items that may be needed in an emergency such as heart medication, insulin, asthma inhaler, Epipen, etc. Every summer the beach patrol responds to emergencies that could have been avoided if the person brought their medication.

Beach patrons sometimes make the mistake and bring some unnecessary items to the beach. The top of that list is alcohol. Alcohol is illegal on the beach in Ocean City and is a citable offense that will be enforced by the Ocean City Beach Patrol and Ocean City Police Department. Besides being illegal, alcohol increases your chances of being stricken by a heat related illness, as hundreds of beach patrons are each season. Also some of our serious diving injuries occur to people who are under the influence of alcohol.

We also recommend that people do not bring items of value. Every summer our supervisors are involved with beach patrons who are frantically searching for lost jewelry that is sentimental or of extremely high value. Losing something like an engagement ring, expensive eyeglasses or wallet can be quite upsetting. Almost daily people lose prescription eyeglasses in the surf never to be recovered. Keep it simple and just bring the basics to the beach.



Captain's Note: Remember to take frequent breaks during the day from physical activity. Bring light clothing to cover up from the sun as well as a hat and a quality pair of sunglasses. But most importantly, introduce yourself and your family to YOUR lifeguard... They are glad you are on their beach!!!