



## A Lifeguard's Beach Safety Tips

by Sgt. Ed Fisher  
Special to the Dispatch

*The writer is a 17-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 Sure Rescue Technicians guard the beach seven days a week from 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.*



### Umbrellas at the Beach

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With water temperatures around the 60-degree mark, only the bravest of swimmers have been heading into the ocean. What lifeguards have been focused on in recent weekends are windswept umbrellas barreling down the beach at speeds of 20 mph and more. High winds and gusts are common on the shoreline, and these conditions mixed with an improperly set umbrella can mean trouble.

Unfortunately, every summer the Beach Patrol responds to medical emergencies caused by flying umbrellas. In some cases injuries are serious enough to require EMS



*A properly set umbrella will be 18-24 inches below the surface and face the wind*

response. It is almost never the person who owns the umbrella that gets hit, but someone else's umbrella that hits some unsuspecting person.

These accidents can often be prevented and are basically caused by an umbrella that was not set properly in the sand. Not only does a flying umbrella often result in some type of injury that requires medical attention, it can also have legal ramifications.

The person to whom the flying umbrella belongs can be held responsible

for any injury caused to another person. This is why it is important to follow a few important bits of advice when setting beach umbrellas.

1. If you rent an umbrella make sure the beach stand operator is the person that sets it. If you reset the umbrella on your own then you are responsible.
2. When setting the umbrella just jabbing it into the ground is not enough. You must jab and then rock the whole umbrella pole back and forth until about 18-24 inches of the pole are beneath the sand. Screwing into the sand is not effective either.
3. Make sure the umbrella is titled into the wind. This will prevent a gust from getting up under the umbrella. The higher the wind the smaller the angle should be between the beach and umbrella.
4. Use common sense. If winds are high and you are using a wimpy plastic or light metal umbrella or your umbrella setting skills are poor, do not set your umbrella.

A lifeguard on duty may give you these tips and suggestions, but will not set your umbrella for you. Lifeguards also ask you to set all umbrellas behind their stands.

Umbrellas set east of the lifeguard stand impede the lifeguard's view. If you arrive at the beach before lifeguards are on duty be sure to set your umbrella a few yards behind the high tide line. Happy shading under your properly set umbrella. Cheers!