



Ocean City Today – On Guard Safety Tips

by Kristin Joson



The writer has been working with the Beach Patrol for nine years. In the off-season, she is an Instructional Specialist in Charles 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.

17 Crews of the OCBP Stretch 10 Miles of Beach

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Red, navy, yellow, royal blue and even light blue, why are there so many different colors for uniforms? Let's clear up the confusion. We wear different colors to differentiate the roles and the way the members of the Ocean City Beach Patrol are organized. We currently employ close to 200 people. With this large number of employees, the organization of the patrol is extremely important.

The key ingredient and one of the most important position's in the patrol's organization system is the "crew chief." Each surf rescue technician (SRT) or better known as the lifeguard is a member of a crew. SRTs wear red and each is a member of one of the 17 crews that stretch from the Inlet jetty to the Delaware state line.

Each crew functions as a team and has five or six lifeguard stands, with the crew chief stand located in the center. In addition to the crew chief there is an assistant crew chief and up to six additional SRTs who work together to cover all stands in the crew from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. as well as days off, lunch breaks and mandatory workouts.

The crew chief is the leader of the crew. You can spot a crew chief because they wear the navy blue shirts. Their stand is where the crew's radio is located. Crew chiefs and assistant crew chiefs act as the liaisons for their crew to the area supervising sergeants, headquarters and the Town of Ocean City's Communications Center. The area sergeants wear the royal blue shorts and white shirts. SRTs send emergency calls down the beach by semaphore (flag signals) that are then sent over the radio by the crew chief.

All guards are trained the same way so that guards from anywhere on the beach can work together to save lives. But, different parts of Ocean City's coastal geography make for different working environments, and each crew takes great pride in keeping their area of beach safe and orderly. In order to promote teamwork and crew pride, the beach patrol sponsors competitions throughout the summer to encourage crew members to work and practice together using essential life guarding skills.

Guards on the patrol are young men and women who are sometimes facing the biggest challenge of their lives. They learn that they can depend on one another on the beach in stressful situations and this facilitates the forming of fast and strong friendships. The crew chief is not only the organizational head of the crew, but the person responsible for fostering self respect and self esteem in crew members. Crew members often look to their crew chiefs to be role models both on and off the beach.

For many guards on the patrol the word “crew” is synonymous with family. Much like a family, guards do not always get along. Yet, they know that, even on the most stressful days, they can look to their right and left and see crew members who will be at their sides through the best and worst the job has to offer. Every guard makes a daily promise to the patrons on their beach and fellow guards to give whatever it takes to make sure that everyone goes home safely.

Every leader on the Beach Patrol has risen through the ranks of the Ocean City Beach Patrol. We do not give credit for certifications or time worked on other beach patrols. Every member of the patrol experiences each position as they move up through the ranks. However, years of service is not the criteria by which promotions are earned. The beach patrol has a well-defined training, evaluation and promotion program that is designed to maintain our excellent reputation and deliver the quality of service our visitors deserve and enjoy each year.

We want everyone to enjoy Ocean City and we want to remind you of our number one piece of advice, “Keep your feet in the sand until the lifeguard’s in the stand!” This one simple act could save a life, yours or someone you love.

Photo to right taken by Kristin Joson
This is crew 16 from the 2011 season. Garrett Lee is the crew chief in the navy colored shirt.

