

California State Parks Lifeguard Service



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park they are planning to visit. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

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For further information about California State Parks' lifeguard services, contact:
AquaticSafety@parks.ca.gov.

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State Parks lifeguards tend to a near-drowning victim aboard the Surf Watch II rescue boat off Santa Cruz, 1998

Each year more than 85 million people visit California's 278 state parks, a majority of which offer some form of aquatic recreation. In fact, on visitor surveys, water recreation was given as the number one reason for visiting a state park. From the earliest days, the popularity, attraction and possible danger of water-oriented recreation posed concerns to park staff. Good roads and affordable automobiles led tens of thousands to seek out an inexpensive way to cool off—water recreation. However, as more and



Lifeguards at Huntington State Beach, 1974



Robert Isenor, founder of the California State Parks Lifeguard Service, ca. 1950

more people visited parks featuring aquatic recreation, the number of drownings increased dramatically.

Lifeguard services began in California's state parks in 1950, at Huntington State Beach. The first permanent lifeguard classification was created in 1956. Today California State Parks manages more than 300 miles of seacoast and more than 625 miles of river and lake shoreline, much of which are patrolled by State Parks lifeguards.

DID YOU KNOW...

- More than 10,000 water rescues were performed by State Parks lifeguards in 2004.
- Since 1967, State Parks lifeguards have rescued over 201,500 people.
- Aquatic recreation accounts for two thirds of all visitor activity, attendance and revenue generated in California State Parks.
- Nationally, drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death, and is the leading cause of accidental death in California's state parks.
- 50 percent of the United States population are nonswimmers.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS JUNIOR LIFEGUARD PROGRAM

In an effort to provide quality water safety education, the State Parks Junior Lifeguard Program introduces young people to safe marine and aquatic recreation opportunities and ocean lifesaving skills. Students of all abilities and skill levels may participate.

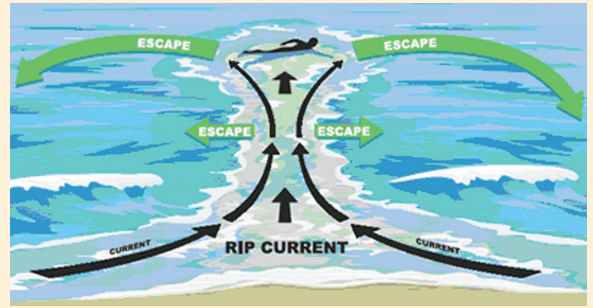
At all stages of the program, safety is the primary consideration, as students are challenged to have a good time, become more physically fit, and learn respect for the water, themselves and each other.

The Junior Lifeguards' team-building philosophy is perfect for learning how to deal with various water safety situations. The program consists of day camps, usually lasting three to five weeks, that provide instruction in first aid, CPR, ocean safety, rescue techniques, surfing and bodyboarding. Currently, Junior Lifeguard programs are available at state beaches in the Los Angeles, Ventura, Monterey, Orange County, San Diego, Santa Barbara County, and Santa Cruz areas, and at Lake Perris and Folsom Lake State Recreation Areas.



Junior Lifeguards enjoy their ride aboard the Surf Watch rescue boat.

How to Avoid and Survive Rip Currents



Learn how to swim!

- Never swim alone.
- Be cautious at all times, especially when swimming at unguarded beaches. If in doubt, don't go out!
- Whenever possible, swim at a lifeguard-protected beach.
- Obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards.
- If caught in a rip current, remain calm to conserve energy and think clearly.
- Don't fight the current. Swim out of the current in a direction following the shore-line. When out of the current, swim toward shore.
- If you are unable to swim out of the rip current, float or calmly tread water. When out of the current, swim toward shore.
- If you are still unable to reach shore, draw attention to yourself—face the shore, wave your arms and yell for help.
- If you see someone in trouble, get help from a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not available, have someone call 911. Throw the rip current victim something that floats and yell instructions on how to escape.

Remember, many people drown while trying to save someone else from a rip current.

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LIFEGUARD PROGRAM CREDITED WITH FEWER DROWNINGS

Monday, January 31, 2005

by Carol Benfell

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After a series of drownings, the state parks department instituted a lifeguard program along the Sonoma Coast in 1990.

Lifeguards perform water rescues and also patrol the most dangerous beaches—Wright's Beach and Goat Rock Beach—warning unwary beachcombers and trying to prevent accidents. Some 10,500 contacts were made in 2004.

The number of drownings along the coast has dropped significantly since the program began, according to state figures.

In the 1980s, five to 10 people drowned each year off the Sonoma Coast. In the past five years, that number has dropped to one or two along the Sonoma Coast and another one or two in the area of Salt Point and Fort Ross, a separate ranger district.

*Photos by David Royal
Monterey County Herald*



A 15-year-old girl (above) is comforted while awaiting news of the fate of her friend who was swept out to sea by a big wave. The girls had been boogie boarding at Carmel Beach when the wave hit them. California State Parks lifeguards carried her friend to shore after the rescue at sea (below). She suffered from hypothermia, but was otherwise fine.

