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# Enjoy the beaches in safety



Oregon State University  
Extension Service  
and  
Oregon State Parks and  
Recreation Department

## Enjoy the beaches in safety

We hope your visit will be one to remember joyfully—and we're sure it will be *if you treat the ocean with respect.*

Beachcombing, picnics, hiking, and taking pictures will all be happy memories of your holiday if you and your family heed the special safety rules for the coastal area.

Check the tide before going on the beach, rocks, or in the water. You can obtain tide cards or books at motels, sport shops, sporting goods stores, and other shops. Most tidebooks contain coastal fishing and shellfish regulations, too.

The law regulates gathering sea stars and other marine life in all areas. Ask local authorities about restrictions and don't "collect" yourself into trouble.

Shooting any kind of pistol or rifle is prohibited on Oregon beaches.

Here are a few marine cautions you'll want the family to understand.

## Driving on the beach

Inviting though it looks, the beach is not always a good highway. Driving on the sand can do much damage to your car—and if you're not careful, you could lose it entirely.

*All driving on Oregon beaches is regulated.* When you plan to drive on the beach, check the beach access sign as you enter. It will spell out the regulations applying to that part of the beach. Remember that the beach speed limit is *25 miles per hour.*

Careful driving on the beach is just as important in saving lives as it is on the highway:

- Keep your car out of soft sand.
- Be cautious about crossing streams.
- Never park your car and leave it unattended for long, especially at low tide—you could find it under several feet of water when you return!
- Don't drive over vegetation. In many areas, vegetation has been planted to protect private property from being buried by sand.
- Valuables aren't secure in your vehicle—take them with you!

## Tides

Every 24 hours and 50 minutes, the tide rises and falls twice. The outgoing tide is the most dangerous for

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*swimming* because it can pull almost anything, including huge logs, in its path.

Incoming tides are most dangerous for *fishing and exploring*—when you're not paying attention!

If you're *boating*, check not only the tides but also weather, wave conditions, and fog. The Coast Guard can supply this information.



## High waves

Be alert at all times for extra high waves. They come unexpectedly, and they're especially dangerous to children—and people of any age who fish from low rocks and jetties. Occasional "sneaker" waves build up and come much higher than others.

*Never play on or around logs and driftwood that can be rolled or tossed by unexpected waves.* Many people have been crippled for life—and some have been killed—under the crush of rolling logs in the surf.



## Rip currents or "undertows"

Strong outward currents of water, rushing out to sea, create such a force at certain spots along the beach that a person can be swept off his or her feet and carried out-

ward. Tides flowing in or out of bays and around jetties also cause very strong currents.

If you do get caught:

- Don't panic.
- Get in a horizontal position and stay afloat.
- Don't waste energy fighting against the strong current—keep calm.
- Swim or drift on down the beach to get out of the current.
- Swim in to shore at a different spot.

Better yet, don't get caught!

## Sunbathing and swimming

Sunbathing and swimming can be a fatal combination on hot summer days unless you exercise caution. In areas protected from the wind, such as the lee of a headland, air temperatures often climb into the 80°F range as a result of heat reflected from the sand. Sunbathers are tempted to plunge into the 47 to 52°F water for relief.

The sudden temperature change can cause hypothermic shock—the *swimmer can lose consciousness and drown.* If you want to swim, enter the water *gradually*, so your body can become accustomed to the cold water.

## Hiking and climbing

Stay behind retaining walls and be sure the children do, too. Cliff trails are *slippery* in wet weather! Don't trust shallow-rooted shrubs on coastal cliffs for climbing support—they could cause the downfall of a thrill seeker. The thrill is gone when an adventurer falls to the rocks below.

Many cliffs are undercut and unstable. Stay back from the edge!

Offshore rocks and jetties are a temptation to people who fish or explore nature—and to children. Often exposed during low tides, these may be under violent waves as the tide returns. Many lives have been lost when unwary persons let themselves be trapped offshore by incoming waves and tides.

Logs and driftwood piles often contain nails, broken glass, and other snags. Treat them with respect.

Do not climb or carve names on beachfront banks. These are major causes of erosion.

Also, please respect private property by using public accesses to and from the beach.

- *The coast is fun!* Exploring the beaches, bays, rocks, tide pools, dunes, and driftwood is exciting and educational.
- *But enjoy them in safety!* Set a good example to children by observing precautions yourself.



## Bay areas

Bays offer many recreational activities and abound in fish and shellfish. Slippery rocks and soft mud can be a hazard in some areas.

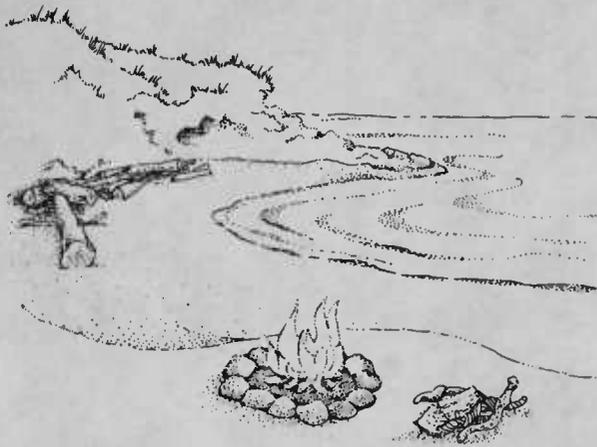
## Sand dunes

Playing on the sand dunes is lots of fun, but exploring them alone is not for the inexperienced or for children.

Sand is very unstable. Digging and tunneling in sand is hazardous—and *can be fatal.* Tunnel walls can collapse and bury anyone caught in them. And, like snow in an avalanche, sand on the dune surface can slide downhill, filling holes and trapping unwary occupants.



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## Beach fires

If you cook on the beach, check local regulations.

- Use fire pits that won't allow the wind to scatter and spread the fire.
- Douse unattended fires—*with wet sand or water*. Along parts of the coast, sand dunes have been stabilized with special grasses and shrubs. Unattended fires can spread to this cover and destroy years of costly work as well as damage property.
- Building a fire in driftwood is prohibited—coastal breezes could easily fan a fire into an uncontrollable state. Build fires away from drift logs and beach or dune grasses.

In state parks, build fires only in approved places:

- camp stoves or fireplaces provided for this purpose;
- portions of the beach designated as permissible for fires; and
- portable stoves in established campsites, park picnic areas, and designated beaches where fires are permitted.

Note: When there's a high fire hazard, park managers may restrict or prohibit fires that are normally permitted in park areas.

## Beach safety pointers

- Never turn your back on the surf.
- If you play in the surf, pick the right place and time.
- Use only safe, marked trails to the beach.
- Don't let children explore alone on beach, surf, rocks, or sand dunes.
- Fires on beaches fronting state parks and waysides are subject to state park rules.
- Outside state park boundaries, recreational fires are permitted, downwind and away from drift logs and beach or dune grass.
- Put fires out—*with wet sand or water*—when you leave.
- Use the buddy system when swimming, exploring—or just beachcombing. Let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return.
- Check regulations, tides, and weather conditions before driving, hiking, swimming, and boating.

*Enjoy Oregon's beautiful beaches in safety!*

## In case of emergency, contact:

Oregon State Police  
Oregon State Parks  
U.S. Coast Guard  
U.S. Forest Service  
Fire departments  
Civil Air Patrol

*Dial 911. The operator will help.*

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