
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE

NEWS

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NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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'BREAK THE GRIP OF THE RIP' TO FOCUS ON PREVENTION OF RIP CURRENT DEATHS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States Lifesaving Association will launch a public awareness campaign about the danger of rip currents to swimmers at United States coastal and Great Lakes beaches. At least 100 people die annually from rip currents and it is estimated that 80 percent of all lifeguard rescues are the result of swimmers unable to escape a rip current. It is estimated that many more such deaths are not reported. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

WHAT: Press Conference, Unveiling of New National Safety Campaign

WHEN: Monday, May 24, 2004, 10 – 11 a.m. Kickoff Event

WHERE: Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort
1706 N. Lumina Avenue
Wrightsville Beach, NC 28480 (just outside Wilmington, NC)

WHO: Retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator
B. Chris Brewster, president of the United States Lifesaving Association
Jim Lushine, NOAA Weather Service, warning coordination meteorologist
Wendy Carey, Delaware Sea Grant, research scientist
Santee LaMotte, widow of CNN correspondent and bureau chief Larry LaMotte who drowned June 8 while trying to rescue 11-year old son.
LaMotte's children Ryan and Krysta are also participating.
Peter Davis, lifeguard and USLA education director

BACKGROUND: The purpose is to bring information to the public to make the beach experience safer; to promote the use of rip current forecasts, where available, in local weather forecasts and warnings; and an effort to standardize messages concerning rip currents and how to avoid them. A standardized national sign for beach communities will be unveiled as will a new NOAA National Weather Service rip current information Web site and a national informational brochure.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.