



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

Neil Abercrombie
GOVERNOR

LORETTA J. FUDDY
DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REMINDS EVERYONE TO
STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE IN THE WATER**

HONOLULU – The week before Memorial Day is Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week (May 21-27, 2012). By offering tips and through the Hawai'i Beach Safety website (hawaiibeachsafety.org), the state Department of health is raising awareness about healthy and safe water activities, including ways to prevent water-related injuries and illnesses.

“The Hawai'i Beach Safety website can help both visitors and residents decide which beach to go to, depending on the conditions that day,” said Health Director Loretta Fuddy. “The Injury Prevention and Control Section at the Department of Health funded the beach assessments for the website and works with the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association and all County Ocean Safety programs in raising the awareness of the need for beach safety.”

Hawai'i has the second highest resident drowning rate in the United States; a rate that is twice the average for the rest of the country. Each year, approximately 52 people in Hawai'i drown in the ocean, including 25 Hawai'i residents and 27 who are non-residents or visitors. Ocean drownings are by far the leading cause of death among visitors to Hawai'i, accounting for 40 percent of the total.

Residents and visitors are all reminded to:

- Swim at lifeguarded beaches
- Follow the lifeguard warnings and heed the posted signs

(more)

- Pay attention to the changing conditions
- Swim with a buddy and know your limits
- When in doubt, don't go out

Before going to the beach, anyone with web access can check on current ocean conditions of all guarded and unguarded beaches across the state at www.hawaii beachesafety.org. This site features safety information about hazards (e.g. rip currents and dangerous shore breaks), prevention tips, surf reports, special alerts (e.g. box jelly fish) and warnings. Information on the website is updated several times each day. Partners involved in the development of the website include the Ocean Safety and Lifeguard Services Division at the City and County of Honolulu, Hawai'i Lifeguard Association, County Ocean Safety programs, University of Hawai'i School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, Hawai'i Tourism Authority, and Hawai'i State Department of Health.

“The United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) is the national organization that certifies ocean life-saving skills and the physical conditioning necessary to qualify as a lifeguard in Hawai'i,” said Ralph Goto, Administrator of Ocean Safety for the City & County of Honolulu and Director of the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association, the Hawai'i affiliate of the USLA. “Hawai'i has some of the best lifeguards in the world and this is an opportunity to remind everyone to be aware of ocean conditions and always check with a lifeguard before entering the water.”

Beach Safety Website www.hawaii beachesafety.org

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