

Hawaii News Now – To Promote Beach Safety, Big Island Firefighter recounts His Devastating Bodysurfing Injury

A big island firefighter and waterman is telling his personal story of how careless moment in the ocean can turn into tragedy.

He's speaking out as a part of Ocean Safety Week to remind us all that even those who are experienced need to be careful.

Here's Mark Carpenter.

Yurik Resetnikov grew up in Kona. A ten-year veteran of the Hawaii County Fire Department.

A skilled and experienced waterman and life all changed on October 12th, 2015.

During a trip to Sandy Beach Park.

It was a really good wave and uh, I don't regret it.

It was a good wave and I hit the bottom and uh the wrong way and, and I broke my neck.

And I was instantly paralyzed under water.

I couldn't come up for air.

And the waves didn't let up.

I felt another wave pick me up and slammed me down and I blacked out on that second wave.

After the incident, friends brought him to shore and lifeguards performed CPR.

What followed, months of intense rehab both here and on the mainland.

The first month and a half, I couldn't move anything.

I couldn't speak, couldn't move any part of my body like to, to, to communicate.

I had to blink on a letter card, like a through z and they just go through each letter, you blink at whatever word you want to spell.

The father of two completely severed his spinal cord and while he can feel his thumbs, he's paralyzed from the shoulders down.

But for the last six years, he's fought for every movement.

Finding ways to stay active.

I try to swim.

I competed in the national wheelchair games for the VA in Orlando.

I flew over there and competed in that.

Swimming events and uh shooting events.

Resnetnikov's story is cautionary tale and underscores the importance of reading the signs and knowing your abilities.

It's also an account of resilience and realizing the ocean can be a place of heartbreak and healing.

Just everything around my life is based on the ocean and two is a uh I don't like to lose.

And I felt I did for a while, so I need to get back in the ocean and surf again and or I'll lose it.

Mark Carpenter, Hawaii News Now.