Man-O-War are not jellyfish, but an animal made up of a colony of organisms known as a Siphonophore. It is most prevalent on the Florida east coast from November to March. They consist of a blue colored bladder-like balloon with tentacles, which reach out below the surface of the water up to 40 feet long. Coming into contact with the tentacles can cause a painful sting lasting 2 hours. **Treatment–** If you are stung, peel or wipe the tentacles off as quickly as possible. Apply vinegar or warm water to the affected area. A paste of meat tenderizer and water can also be effective in treating the sting. Seek further aid from lifeguards or call 911 if you are susceptible to allergic reactions from insect stings.

Jellyfish are a year round pest found on both the eastern and gulf coasts of Florida. Usually clear or pink colored, jellyfish stings cause mild to moderate discomfort. **Treatment–** Vinegar or warm water are also used to treat jellyfish stings.

Sea lice or Sea-bathers Eruption. Sea lice are found mostly on the southeast Florida coast from late April to June. These tiny pests are the larvae stage of the thimble jellyfish. They can cause itching and rashes lasting one to three days. **Prevention** - Ask the Ocean Lifeguard prior to entering the water if sea lice are present. If you do go in the water, shower and change your suit immediately after swimming. **Treatment–** Hydrocortisone crème or a oral antihistamine such as Benadryl.

FIN FACTS

When people think about wildlife in the ocean, they most often think about fish, sharks and dolphins. Those creatures are out there and they form part of a large and diverse group. The three main groups are:

Bony Fishes: These fishes include everything from the tiny goby (as small as 3/8 of an inch long) to the massive tuna (weighing as much as 1500 lbs). Nearly all bony fishes are harmless to humans but there are exceptions. Though a rare occurrence, barracuda, bluefish and jacks have been known to mistake humans for prey and cause injury. When in the presence of these fish (or schools of bait fish), it is best to stay out of the water.

Cartilaginous Fishes: These fishes include sharks, sting rays and skates. Despite a fearsome reputation, sharks cause far fewer injuries or deaths worldwide than are caused by dog bites, bee stings, or even lightning strikes. Stingrays are generally harmless unless stepped on, but can inflict painful injuries if that occurs. Skates are not known to be harmful.

Cetaceans: This group includes dolphins, porpoises and whales. Any of these may be seen near the shore, but the bottlenose dolphin is the most likely candidate, as they are the most abundant species of dolphin from Cape Cod to the Gulf of Mexico. They can be seen in bays or estuaries, and frolicking offshore in large groups called pods, sometimes leaping from the water.

When interacting with any of the ocean's creatures, use common sense. They are wild animals and must be treated with respect. Remember, when you step into the ocean, you are stepping into their world.

Do your part; keep the beaches dark during **SEA TURTLE** nesting season March 1 - October 31. Female Sea Turtles will crawl up on the beach at night, dig a hole and deposit their eggs on the beach above the high tide line. Each nest has an average of 100 eggs and hatch in about 60 days.
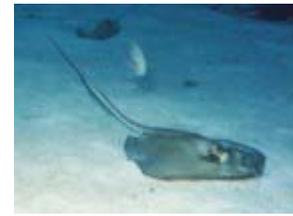
Sting Rays are not aggressive marine animals and usually are not dangerous, but are easily frightened. Rays often bury themselves in the sand, in shallow water. If accidentally stepped on, rays reflexively flip their tail. This flip of the tail can result in the barb lacerating the skin. Stingrays are common on all Florida beaches, but are more numerous on the west and gulf coasts. Shuffling your feet while entering the water is one way of avoiding surprising these creatures. Stings can be painful, and depending on the sting site, determine its severity. Immediately seek first-aid treatment from a lifeguard or call 911 if you are stung.

Sharks are found in all Florida coastal waters. Shark attacks are very rare, usually occurring in murky water and/or where schooling fish (shark's natural food source) are located. Lifeguards will post the double red flags and clear the water when sharks are present.

Barracuda and Baitfish are found in all Florida coastal waters. Barracuda are a long, streamlined fish who are not usually considered dangerous. Baitfish are schools of fish who gather in groups for safety. They are a main food source for larger fish species including sharks, barracuda and tarpon. If you see schools of baitfish in the ocean, get out of the water until the fish leave the area.

Help sea turtles and other wildlife. Pick up discarded trash and keep the beach litter free. Plastics (bags, rings, balloons...) and cigarette butts are mistakenly eaten and cause death. Wildlife become entangled in fishing line and plastics also resulting in death. With your help, we can keep our beaches beautiful and wildlife friendly.

SURVIVING THE HEAT AT THE BEACH

Too much exposure to the sun can cause serious heat related illnesses.

While enjoying the beach, your body is working to maintain its normal internal temperature of 98.6 degrees. When its cool outside, your body tries to conserve heat. When it is hot or your physical activity increases, your body works hard to decrease its internal heat.

Heat Cramps are painful muscle spasms that usually occur in the legs and abdomen after exercising for too long. **Treatment-** Place person in a cool place, drink fluids and massage the affected muscles.

Heat Exhaustion is more serious. The symptoms may include excessive sweating, cool, pale, moist skin, fatigue, nausea, headache and dizziness, and in more serious cases, vomiting and loss of consciousness. **Treatment-** Place person in a cool place, replacing fluids as tolerable, treat for shock by laying the victim down and elevating their legs. Then cool the victim by applying wet towels or by fanning.

Heat Stroke is the most serious of all heat disorders and a life-threatening emergency- call 911 immediately. The symptoms include hot, red, dry skin, very high body temperature and dizziness or loss of consciousness. **Prevention-** Be safe while it is hot outside, don't stay out too long, seek shade, wear sunscreen and eye protection, and drink plenty of fluids. **Treatment-** Follow heat exhaustion care, except give nothing by mouth. If you suspect any of the symptoms related to heat stroke, seek help from an Ocean Lifeguard immediately. They are trained to handle these and other medical emergencies.

RIP CURRENTS

... a current of water that pulls you <u>away</u> from shore
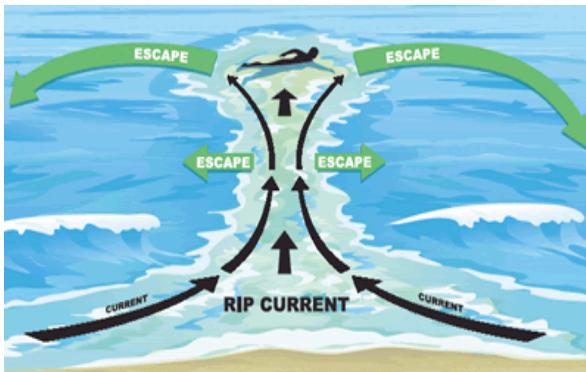
SURVIVING A RIP CURRENT

Don't panic and don't fight the current. Swim out of the current in a direction following the shoreline. When out of the current, swim towards shore. If you are unable to swim out of the current, float or calmly tread water. If you are 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 or call 911. Throw the victim something that floats and yell instructions on how to escape. Remember, many people drown while attempting to save others in a rip current.

RIP CURRENT FACTS

Rip currents cause over 100 drownings every year in the U.S.A. and are responsible for 80% of water rescues on surf beaches. The pulling duration of a rip current varies, sometimes ending just past the line of breaking waves, or it can continue for hundreds of yards out to sea.

RIP CURRENT MYTHS

Rip Currents do not pull people under, they pull people away from shore. Drowning occurs when people caught in a rip current are unable to keep themselves afloat to swim to shore. This may be due to any combination of fear, panic, exhaustion, or lack of swimming skill.

LIGHTNING:

DANGER FROM ABOVE

Lightning is the most dangerous and most likely to be encountered weather danger experienced by people, and is the number-one cause of storm related deaths. Most victims are children and young men between the ages of 10 to 35. Up to 20% of those struck will die, but anybody working or playing outside is vulnerable. What can you do to reduce the danger?

If you hear it, fear it!

If you see it, flee it!

Follow the National Weather Service's 30-30 Rule: if you hear thunder within 30 seconds of seeing lightning, seek shelter immediately! No place outside is safe from lightning. It is best to be in a completely enclosed structure. If you are in an automobile, be sure it has a hard roof and keep the windows up. After the storm has passed wait 30 minutes before going outside again. This will help reduce the possibility of being struck. Also, heed the lifeguard's warning about approaching storms. They often have sophisticated lightning warning equipment as well as the experience to know when storm trouble is brewing.

BEACH WARNING FLAGS
BANDERAS DE ADVERTENCIA EN LA PLAYA

Water Closed to Public
Agua Cerrada al Público

High Hazard
High Surf and/or Strong Currents
Peligro Alto, Resaca Alta y/o Corrientes Fuertes

Medium Hazard
Moderate Surf and/or Currents
Peligro Medio, Resaca Moderada y/o Corrientes Fuertes

Low Hazard
Calm Conditions, Exercise Caution
Peligro Bajo, Condiciones Calmas, Tenga Cuidado

Dangerous Marine Life
Vida Marina Peligrosa

Absence of Flags Does Not Assure Safe Waters
La Ausencia de Banderas No Asegura Aguas Seguras
www.dep.state.fl.us/cmp

This beach safety message was produced by a dedicated team of professional lifeguards and endorsed by:

www.fbpca.org

www.usla.org
www.uslaser.org

www.noaa.gov

Beach Safety Week is the week prior to Memorial Day. Contact the USLA or your local Ocean Lifeguard Agency for more information.

FLORIDA BEACH SAFETY AWARENESS

<u>**Swim near a Lifeguard.**</u> Swimming in a guarded area greatly reduces the risk of drowning.

<u>**Learn to swim.**</u> This is the best defense against drowning. Teach children at an early age.

<u>**Never swim alone.**</u> Have someone on shore watching you.

<u>**Swim Sober.**</u> Alcohol and swimming don't mix.

<u>**Don't use a float where you can't swim.**</u> Non-swimmers should not use floatation devices in areas too deep to stand. These floats can deflate or be lost in the surf.

<u>**Don't dive head-first.**</u> Always check for depth and obstructions before diving.

<u>**Apply sunscreen early and often.**</u> Sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes prior to exposure to the sun and have at least a SPF 15 rating.

<u>**Know which warning flags are flying and what they mean.**</u> Florida ocean-front beaches display a uniform beach warning flag system. Each flag signifies a degree of hazard. When in doubt, ask the lifeguard, they are the professionals.