

Swimmer Dies in Ocean City; Officials Warn About Rip Currents

<http://www.wmdt.com/story/25681316/update-ocean-city-swimmer-dies-after-getting-caught-in-rip-current>

OCEAN CITY, Md. – Just over a week into Ocean City's busy season, an 18-year-old victim who was rescued from the ocean yesterday has died.

According to social media, Don Boma, of Burtonsville, Maryland was a Paint Branch High School graduate, and was in Ocean City for "Beach Week." Ocean City Beach Patrol officials say it was the first time someone has died after needing a water rescue since June 2007.

Officials say Boma and two other swimmers were caught in a rip current around 137th Street. Beach Patrol officials say two lifeguards went in to help, and one of them quickly rescued two of the swimmers. The other lifeguard reportedly swam to Boma, who then went under water. Officials say it took 15 rescue swimmers to locate him. He was reportedly treated on scene, and was later pronounced dead at Atlantic General Hospital.

Ocean City Beach Patrol says there were a number of flash rip currents on Monday, which may have been part of the problem.

"That's a rip current that can pop open and stay open for a brief period of time," say Lieutenant Ward Kovacs with the Ocean City Beach Patrol. "Our goal is to keep people out of trouble before they get into it, but it's a little different when the flash currents open up, because lifeguards don't have a warning when that will happen."

47 ABC's Chief Meteorologist Travis Michels, also a lifeguard with Rehoboth Beach Patrol, says the past few days have made for particularly rough waters.

"It has been a bit of a more dangerous time to be at the beaches," says Michels. "There have been moderate to high rip current threats over the past couple of days."

Experts say rip currents can vary from day to day, hour to hour, and even on various locations in a particular town, but there are some things every beach-goer can do to stay safe.

"What we'd like to ask people to do is not go in the ocean if they don't know how to swim," says Lt. Kovacs. "Before you go in the ocean, go talk to lifeguards in the area where you are going to swim and ask about any particular conditions on that day. Knowing your own swimming ability, you'll be able to gauge whether or not to go in."

If you feel yourself caught in a rip current, Ocean City Beach Patrol says swimmers should use "R-I-P."

"We want them to remember that the "r" stands for "relax," as in don't panic when you get caught in a rip current. The "I" is for "I need help" as soon as you realize that you are in trouble and not

comfortable in the water," says Lt. Kovacs. "The "p" stands for "parallel," we ask people to turn parallel to the beach and try to stop directly trying to swim in."

"The more you panic, the more trouble you're going to get in," says Michels.

Experts say you can also spot a rip current by looking for foamy and bubbly water, with a sandy, dark color. They say it's impossible to predict rip currents more than about a day or so in advance, so the best thing swimmers can do is be cautious.

"I wouldn't say don't swim, just be smart about what you're doing," says Michels.