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# After drownings, lifeguards caution swimmers about ocean's dangers

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By STACEY ALTHERR [stacey.altherr@newsday.com](mailto:stacey.altherr@newsday.com)

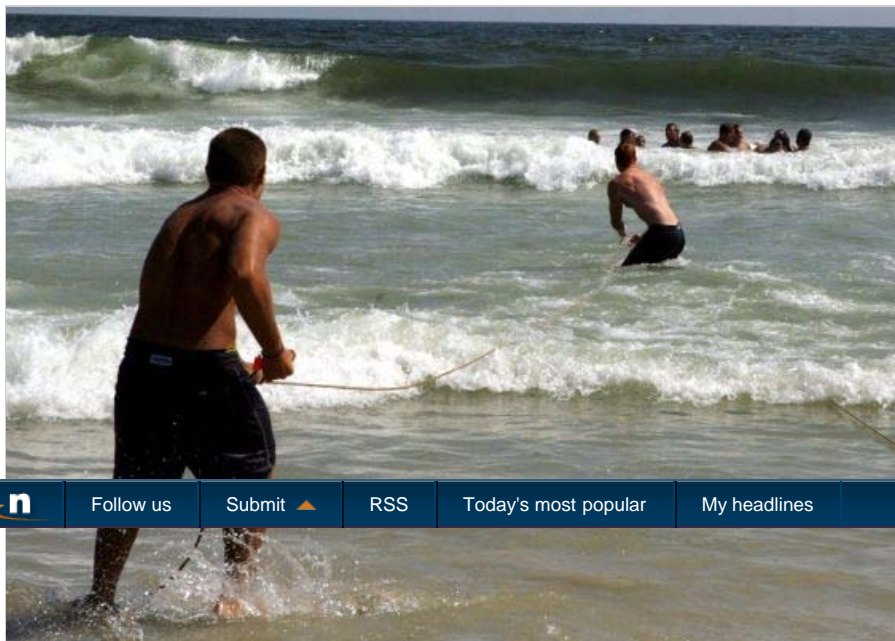


Photo credit: Howard Schnapp | Lifeguards at Jones Beach are kept busy as they rescue swimmers from riptides in Wantagh. (Aug. 1, 2009)

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Be careful out there.

Beachgoers were reminded Thursday that the safest place to be was in a lifeguard-protected area.

Last year, lifeguards and others performed more than 6,000 rescues



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at state beaches alone, thanks to a turbulent storm season that included Hurricane Bill.

**PHOTOS: Police SUV runs over sunbather, as 1 drowns, others rescued in Long Beach surf**

**VIDEO: Teen drowns off Long Beach, man hit by SUV**

**MORE: How to stay safe this summer on LI**

And the storm forecast for this year could make for another dangerous season.

The [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) said Thursday that this year's Atlantic hurricane season could be "one of the more active on record."

The [National Weather Service](#), which monitors ocean movements, said more storms bring on more rip currents, one of the biggest hazards for ocean swimmers.

Rip currents are hard to anticipate, said Timothy Morrin, observation program leader at [National Weather Service](#) in Upton. "Rip currents and their intensity correlate to offshore storms. If you have a busy tropical season, it could lead to more rip currents."

Recent years typically see 2,400 to 3,500 rescues at state beaches and swimming areas, but last year the number at these areas jumped to 6,185 rescues.

"Swim in front of a lifeguard," said Bruce Meiowitz, president of the New York State Lifeguard Corps. "The amount of tragedy in protected areas is about zero."

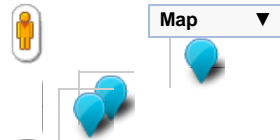
In 2009, there were seven ocean and canal drownings in [Nassau](#) County, according to the medical examiner's office, and one ocean

## Galleries



Summer ocean drownings on LI

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drowning in [Suffolk](#)'s western towns, according to Suffolk police. Figures for Suffolk's eastern towns were not available.

Days before the unofficial start of summer, a 19-year-old college student from [Brooklyn](#), Manny Tiburcio, was presumed to have drowned Wednesday off [Long Beach](#) after a strong current drew him out to sea, officials said.

Neither that student nor Eugene Theodore Jr., who was last seen Wednesday swimming in the ocean off the Central Mall at Jones Beach, were swimming in front of lifeguard-protected areas.

In Long Beach Thursday, lifeguards abandoned their annual chore of setting up the lifeguard chairs to rescue about 10 people, said Paul Gillespie, Long Beach chief of lifeguards.

"You've got to obey the signs," said Joe Possenti, 50, of Westchester. "If it says not to swim, don't swim."

Bob Muscarelli, 78, of Levittown, said he also makes sure someone is watching over any children in his family group.

"Anybody from our party gets in, we have somebody watch them," he said. "I never let younger children go in unobserved."

With Nomaan Merchant

A simple survival guide for beachgoers, courtesy of the Long Beach lifeguards and the National Weather Service:

Learn to swim.

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Local YMCAs, towns, villages all offer lessons, along with many private companies.

Always swim near a lifeguard, and never swim when they are not on duty. Ask lifeguards about the day's conditions, which way the tide sweep is moving, the location of holes in the surf and dangerous rip currents.

Protect your skin by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and long sleeves. Use a sunscreen with protection factor (SPF) rating of 15 or higher. Apply it 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors and again after swimming. Wear sunglasses to protect the eyes.

Watch your children at all times, both in and out of the water.

Stay hydrated with nonalcoholic fluids.

Always go in feet first. Never dive into the ocean.

Never swim alone and attempt to keep within arm's reach of a swim buddy while in the water.

If in doubt, don't go out.

Compiled by Stacey Altherr

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**"I have zero sympathy for the people who go swimming and drown when there are signs all over that say NO SWIMMING or**