



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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**GOVERNOR LINGLE ANNOUNCES HAWAII BEACH SAFETY WEEK
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New Beach Hazard Website Launched and County Lifeguards Honored

HONOLULU – Governor Linda Lingle along with representatives from City & County of Honolulu, County of Kaua'i, County of Maui, County of Hawai'i and private partners launched Hawai'i Beach Safety Week. During the week, demonstrations of the latest in ocean and beach life-saving techniques and equipment will be highlighted statewide through Memorial Day, and a new Beach Hazard Rating website created by the University of Hawai'i and the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association will make its debut.

"The traditional start of the summer beach season means thousands of our school children, residents and visitors will head to our beautiful beaches every day," said Governor Lingle. "I would like to remind everyone to swim near a lifeguard, or where no lifeguard is on duty, swim with a buddy. Despite all of the beauty, the conditions of our beaches and oceans are different every day, and may have some potential hazards that can be avoided if you heed the advice of lifeguards."

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. If drownings among visitors are included, Hawai'i may lead the nation. Each year, approximately 55 people in Hawai'i, nearly half (25) of those residents, drown in the ocean.

(more)

“This week we want to honor the dedicated and courageous men and women of our County Ocean Safety Programs. Their training and conditioning can be the difference between life and death for any beachgoer caught unaware in hazardous conditions,” added the Governor.

“To help ensure our citizens won’t be caught unaware, a new state/county website **www.hawaiibeachsafety.org** enables anyone with web access to check the current ocean conditions before they head to the beach,” said Dr. Chip Fletcher, chair, Department of Geology and Geophysics, School of Ocean, Earth Science & Technology (SOEST) at the University of Hawai‘i. “Data from the National Weather Service is constantly fed into the website’s computers so it can relay beach conditions, dangerous or otherwise, at all Oahu beaches.”

“This website, which is up and running for all islands, can save lives,” said Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. “The Injury Prevention and Control Program at the Department of Health is committed to beach safety and we are proud to help coordinate this week’s activities. We are especially proud to have funded the beach assessments for the website and to work with the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association and all County Ocean Safety programs in raising the awareness of the need for beach safety.”

“The United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) is the national organization that certifies beach and 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 Beach Safety Week is an opportunity to remind our citizens to be aware of ocean conditions and always check with a lifeguard before entering the water.”

Check the Department of Health’s webpage **www.hawaii.gov/doh** for a complete schedule of Hawai‘i Beach Safety Week demonstrations on Kaua‘i, Maui, O‘ahu and the Big Island.

Beach Hazard Rating Website **www.hawaiibeachsafety.org**

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