7-7-2004

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July 7, 2004

DURHAM, N.H. -- Rip currents, channelized currents of water flowing away from shore, account for 80 percent of the rescues performed by lifeguards at surf beaches. These currents, which can quickly change speed, can pull even a strong swimmer out to sea.

Rip currents can be very narrow or more than 50 yards wide. They do not pull people under water, they pull them away from shore. If you're ever caught in one, stay calm and swim in a direction following the shoreline until you're out of the current.

NOAA's National Weather Service, National Sea Grant College Program, and the U.S. Lifesaving Association are working to educate the public on the dangers of rip currents. For a copy of their brochure “Break the Grip of the Rip,” contact Steve Adams, NH Sea Grant communications coordinator, at steve.adams@unh.edu or 603.749.1565.