Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Melbourne FL
800 AM EST Tue Feb 4 2025

...Tuesday February 4 is Marine Hazards and Rip Current Awareness Day...

Since 1989, rip currents and rough surf have claimed at least 185 lives along east central Florida beaches, making this the deadliest weather-related hazard in the state, with more fatalities than hurricanes, tornadoes, and lightning. A rip current is a strong channel of water flowing out past the surf zone that can pull even the strongest swimmer into deeper water beyond the sand bar. As the swimmer attempts to fight the rip current, they become exhausted and often drown. Data analysis shows that 78 percent of rip current victims are either tourists or Floridians who live away from the coast, while 93 percent are male.

In order to avoid being caught in a rip current, there are several steps to take to ensure your safety. The Melbourne National Weather Service issues a daily rip current risk forecast, which is available at www.weather.gov/mlb/ghwo. When arriving at the beach, check with on duty lifeguards on current ocean hazards and only swim within sight of a lifeguard. Never swim alone. If caught in a rip current, swim sideways or parallel to the shoreline and once out of the seaward pull of the rip current, swim directly back to the beach. Do not attempt to swim back to shore against the powerful current. You can also wave your arms and yell for help if unable to swim out of the rip current.

East central Florida averages about 10 boating deaths a year, with one or two deaths being weather-related. The most common cause of weather-related boating accidents is strong winds that flow out ahead of approaching thunderstorms. Gusty northerly winds behind a cold front during the winter and spring months also cause occasional boating accidents.

In addition to the daily marine forecast, boaters should check the Graphical Hazardous Weather Outlook, which includes information about strong thunderstorms and dangerous wind and wave conditions. While on the water, boaters should have a means of receiving warnings and statements, such as a NOAA Weather Radio. Also, follow National Weather Service Melbourne on social media to receive real time updates about impending dangerous weather.