

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA ADVISORY

SWIMMING SAFETY AND SHARKS

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As the July 4th holiday weekend approaches, the NOAA Fisheries Service would like to remind people to take precautions when swimming in the nation's oceans. Shark attacks solicit public attention, but they are rare. The likelihood of being killed in a rip current is far greater. At the same time, people need to be aware of potential dangers and take precautions. The NOAA Shark Web site offers facts on sharks and swimming safety that may be helpful to your readers and viewers.

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sharks>

Many of the same precautions you should take to prevent drowning in a swimming pool also apply to swimming in the ocean. The majority of ocean creatures are harmless to people, but some animals can and occasionally do injure humans. Usually, when an ocean animal hurts a human, it is a defense behavior because the animal perceives the human as a threat.

When a shark bites a human, it is usually mistaken identity. The shark thinks the human is a fish and takes a bite expecting to eat. When the shark realizes that the person is not a seal or fish, it lets go and swims away. This is why most shark "attacks" are hit-and-run incidents and often only result in cuts and bruises, which may require stitches but are not considered serious injuries. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes shark bites can cause serious injuries and rarely can be fatal. There are precautions you can take to reduce your risk of encountering a shark and reducing your risk of a shark attack. The NOAA Fisheries Service encourages all beach goers to "swim smart."

You will find ways to reduce the chance of shark attacks at the following Web site.

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sharks/Press_Kit_Sharks.htm

NOAA shark experts in Florida, Rhode Island and Washington, D.C., will be available for media interviews during the July 4th holiday weekend. Please call the NOAA media contacts listed above.