Clover Safe

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

4-H Youth Development Program

#24 WIND AND WATER SURFING SAFETY

Information available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates the most common types of wind and water surfing injuries are lacerations, fractures, strains/sprains, and contusions. Surfing injuries are frequently caused by surfers being hit by surfboards or falling off their surfboard and impacting against the sand. Many of these injuries could have been prevented by being aware of potential hazards and using safe wind and water surfing practices.

Wind and Water Surfing Safety

- Before using, always inspect the surfboard, sail, mast, and rigging for damage or disrepair.
- If a surfboard fails your pre-use inspection, notify your group leader, parent, or guardian. Do not use the surfboard until it has been repaired.
- Always wear personal protective equipment. When wind surfing, always wear a personal flotation device. Wear a wet suit when surfing in cold water. Always wear lip balm and sunscreen when at the beach.
- Avoid surfing alone. Surf with a partner or as part of a group.
- Surf within your capabilities and endurance. Quit surfing when you become too tired or cold.
- Surfers should be capable of paddling and steering a surfboard in rough water.
- Be aware of and avoid dangerous water conditions, including rip tides and large waves and obstructions such as rocks, reefs, aquatic plants, docks, platforms, piers, pilings, buoy markers, jetties, and other structures.
- Do not surf in swimming areas or areas of commercial vessel, motorboat, sailing, rowing, and/or jet-ski traffic.
- When falling off your surfboard, try to enter the water feet first. If you fall head first, extend your arm in front of you to protect your head and neck. Likewise, when returning to the surface after falling, extend your arm if front of you to protect your head and neck.
- Do not attempt to swim against a rip current. Escape the rip current by swimming across it.
- Always observe beach safety flags for water conditions and obey lifeguard instructions.
- Be aware of surfers around you and maintain a safe distance from other surfers.
- Be alert to changing surf conditions such as increasing wind speeds and building waves beyond your capabilities.
- Avoid jellyfish, sea urchins, sharks, eels, sting rays, and other potentially hazardous marine animals.
- Stop surfing if a thunder or lightning storm approaches or at the first sign of bad weather or rough water conditions. Seek shelter onshore.
- If you notice that a member of your surfing group is missing, immediately notify your project leader, parent, or guardian.
- If you are injured while surfing, notify your project leader, parent, or guardian. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.