

Forecasting of Great Lakes Rip Currents

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Rip Currents can occur at any beach with breaking waves, including many shoreline areas in the Great Lakes. From 2002 to 2008, an average of 8 drowning deaths per year have been documented to be directly related to rip currents on the Great Lakes. To make the public better aware of the rip current potential, the National Weather Service (NWS) has developed a rip current forecast program to identify those days when there is a moderate or high risk of rip currents. Many of the same forecast parameters used to forecast rip currents by NWS offices on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts are also used by Great Lakes NWS offices. Appropriate text and graphical products are issued daily to the public (in season) at NWS Great Lakes offices indicating the potential risk of rip current development for that day. More observational platforms are being added in the near shore environment to aid in this forecasting.