



CHALLENGE AND ADVENTURE ACTIVITY

OPEN WATER: SURF

Conducting programs on the beach that include participants being in the surf creates unique challenges and can be managed by County Operating Procedures (COPs). Program facilitators are encouraged to design their COPs to meet specific program, clientele and volunteer needs. The COPs should include a minimum of the following:

- Inclusive “beach lesson” before participants enter the surf.
 - Understanding the board.
 - Paddling stroke and technique.
 - Safety and rescue process.
 - Practice “getting up on the board.”
- Participants are able to swim a minimum of 20 yards and swim to the surface.
- Participants have a clear understanding of the Safety Plan before entering the surf.
- Facilitator checked surf conditions from a recognized source within 12 hours of the programs start.
- If you use hand signals, use universally known signals (kayaking/boating or scuba diving).
- Consider wave height based on experience of group members.
- Have safety equipment on hand.
 - First aid kit.
 - Floating device designed for rescue.
 - Dedicated rescue board or device.
 - Dedicated adult to survey water and participants from the beach.
 - Dedicated adult to survey participants from the water.
 - Dedicated pair of rescue fins/goggles/snorkel.
- Consider allowing participants to use a PFD if their swimming skills do not meet the above minimum.
- Teach “rip current” self-rescue techniques.
- Continually evaluate course/surf area for potential hazards (floating debris, wind, fishermen, boats, potential thunderstorms or heavy precipitation).
- Continually monitor group members for hypothermia, energy levels, and board safety.
- Be aware of group members’ changing physical, mental and social condition. As problems are identified take appropriate action as soon as possible.
- Instructor/participant ratios should be 1:2 for beginners and 1:5 for experienced participants.
- Teach and practice proper LNT¹ components.
- Does the parking area/trail head require permits?

References

1. Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: www.LNT.org