



*U.S. Coast Guard
Forces Micronesia
Sector Guam*

Safety at Sea



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***Before reading this document, be sure to watch our Joint Region Marianas (JRM) water safety [video](#).**

Guam waters offer a wide range of recreational opportunities: swimming, scuba diving, snorkeling, water skiing, wind surfing and sailing on Guam are some of the best in the Pacific. Along with these recreational activities, however, certain precautions must be practiced to avoid the hazards. For instance: while enjoying Guam's beaches, it is imperative to maintain a constant, direct line of sight of children and fellow swimmers, even if only a few feet into the water due to underwater creatures and riptides.

Swimming and Snorkeling Tips

For swimming and snorkeling, the safest areas are those beaches protected from the ocean by a barrier reef. Inside this reef, the water is calm, shallow and with only a slight current, if any at all. But don't let this calm water fool you because many times people venture out near or onto the reef into deeper water in the pursuit of fish or just sightseeing. This can be extremely dangerous because of two main reasons:

- Waves breaking on the reef. Even in the calmest of conditions, it is difficult and dangerous to be near the reef. The coral itself is extremely sharp and can cause deep and painful cuts. There are also large cracks and holes in the coral, which can catch a foot or hand, thus trapping swimmers. Larger waves have proven to be fatal to swimmers more than once in the past: always exercise extreme caution!
- Waves-caused currents. In almost all cases where the waves are consistently larger than one foot, a strong current runs along the reef. This current is created when water forced inside the reef by the waves is higher than the sea level outside the reef. The water will flow along the reef or shoreline until it finds a place to flow back to the sea. This current can be very strong. A swimmer too close to the reef's edge can get caught in the current and be swept onto or over the reef, often incurring in considerable bodily injury

THE WATERS OF GUAM NEED NOT BE FEARED, JUST RESPECTED.
WE OFFER THIS INFORMATION FOR YOU.



Helpful Tips for Safe Diving/Snorkeling

1. Always dive and/or snorkel with another person and use the proper equipment.
2. If you are not an experienced swimmer/snorkeler, wear a snorkel vest (this will help to keep you afloat and not tire yourself out).
3. Ensure proper training and certification before diving.
4. Always have a dive partner, the proper equipment, and plan your dive accurately.
5. Know where you are going. Contact the local dive shops for information on areas you intend to visit. The [National Weather Service](#) (671-472-0900) has a recorded message on surf, winds, and tide conditions. Local TV, radio, and newspapers also publish this information.
6. Be sure to observe any posted warnings and remain within the designated areas for swimming, snorkeling, and diving

Safety Tips To Remember

- Swim only where lifeguards are present or where you know it is safe to swim.
- Always wear protective footwear to prevent painful coral cuts or stepping on sea urchins.
- Wear fins when you snorkel; fins help with fighting the power of strong currents, especially when the tide is going out.
- Do some research on the dangerous aquatic life in Guam waters. Treat all shells as poisonous and don't handle them.
- Cancel snorkeling, diving, or boating plans when weather forecasters have issued hazardous surf or small craft warnings.
- If a rip current catches you, don't panic. If you can't make any headway, grab onto a coral formation and pull yourself to shore.
- Protective gloves are real assets here. If the water is too deep for grabbing the coral, swim with the current away from the reef.
- Once you have cleared the reef, stay afloat and wait for a rescue team.

‘Boating Tips To Remember’



- *Make sure there is at least one lifejacket on board for each person.*
- *All children and those who are poor swimmers must wear life jackets.*
- *Ensure the boat is equipped with the required visual distress signals, such as flares and lights for emergency situations.*
- *If operating the boat off shore, make sure it is equipped with a working radio. Although CB radios are popular, their power and range is limited to a distance of three miles. The preferred radio to carry is the VHF-FM radio all Coast Guard units monitor. It has a range of more than 50 miles.*
- *In addition to radio, many commercial and recreational boats must carry an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB). The EPIRB is a small radio transmitter designed to transmit the international distress signal. Boats, airplanes and even satellites can pick up the signal.*
- *File a float plan.*
- *Let someone on land know where you'll be going, when you're leaving, and when you expect to return.*
- *Carry extra fuel, food and water, and any tools you may need to make repairs, if a mechanical difficulty arises.*
- *Make sure the boat has an adequate anchor and line suitable for use in the area; ocean floor drop off can be severe and very deep.*
- *Don't operate a boat in designated swimming and diving areas.*
- *Don't operate a boat if drinking alcohol or taking medications.*