

Surfing Information and Safety Awareness

“Surfing” includes any self-propelled wave riding board sport, including Longboard and Shortboard Surfing, Body/“Boogie”boarding, Stand Up Paddling and skimboarding.

Surfing is allowed in-season (from Memorial Day to Labor Day) at Montrose and 57th Street beaches only. However, surfers will not be allowed in active swim areas at any time. ***While Lifeguards may be on-duty, participating is at your own risk. If lifeguards are on duty you must check in with them. The Captain of the Guards or other designated representative of the Chicago Park District has the final authority to allow, limit or deny surfers access to the water.*** Surfing will be allowed out-of-season (from Labor Day until Memorial Day) at Osterman, Montrose, 57th Street and Rainbow beaches. ***No Lifeguards are on-duty during the off-season and participating is at your own risk.***

Surfing Rules and Protocol

- ❖ The Captain of the Guards or a designated representative of the Chicago Park District has the final authority to allow or deny surfers access to the water from any beach. Any surfer accessing the water from a City of Chicago beach will comply with the following conditions:
 - ***Surfers will not be allowed in active swim areas at any time.***
 - Each surfer will contact the nearest on-duty Lifeguard before entering the water.
 - Surfers will access the water and conduct surfing activities at their own risk.
 - Surfers will be responsible to watch for signals from and follow the direction of the Lifeguards.
 - Surfers will make every attempt to “self police” the activities of other surfers.
 - If Lifeguards are not present, please use your best judgment and surf at your own risk.

- ❖ During the “off-season” (Labor Day to Memorial Day), the Chicago Park District will coordinate with other city departments to allow surfers continued access to the water via Chicago City beaches. Any surfer accessing the water from a City of Chicago beach during the “off-season” will comply with the following conditions:
 - Surfers will access the water and conduct surfing activities at their own risk.

- Surfers are authorized to access the water and conduct surfing activities during the “off-season” only at the following beaches: Osterman, Montrose, 57th Street and Rainbow.
 - Surfers will report unauthorized or unsafe entrance to the water by any person.
 - Surfers will make every attempt to “self police” the activities of other surfers.
- ❖ Surfers will always follow commonly accepted surfing safety rules and procedures, which include the following:
- Surfers will control their boards at all times.
 - It is *strongly recommended* that surfers always use safety leashes.
 - Surfers will wear appropriate cold weather gear as conditions dictate.

IMPORTANT NOTE: SURFERS WISHING TO ACCESS THE LAKE MICHIGAN WATER TRAIL TO PRACTICE PADDLING MAY DO SO AT ANY TIME. PLEASE SEE “[LAKE MICHIGAN WATER TRAIL \(PADDLE SPORTS\)](#)” ON THIS WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING INFORMATION AND SAFETY FOR THE LAKE MICHIGAN WATER TRAIL.

It is important that you follow these general guidelines while surfing:

Being prepared to surf is the best way to keep your self safe. Surfing requires being a fit, strong swimmer and having training and knowledge before heading out to the beach. If you are not a confident swimmer, you should not be surfing. Remember that conditions that may be “ideal” for surfing may be deemed “red flag days” for swimming. This means that the water is not safe for swimming because it is dangerous.

Not being alert is the second most common cause of problems while surfing. Other surfers, especially inexperienced ones, may not notice you, so you must look out for them.

You must also watch out for hidden dangers! Winds can shift rapidly, pushing you off your board and into the water. Current eddies and riptides can keep you from swimming ashore easily and undertows are an unforeseen hazard that may result in drowning. Holding on to your board will help you stay afloat. Don’t try to swim directly into the current because you will likely tire yourself out.

Failure to exercise common sense and good judgment is another leading cause of injury. When you're beginning, it's easy to get carried away with the excitement and challenge, so don't take on waves bigger than you can handle. Before you head out, it’s a good idea to practice at a pool with a wave machine so you can get a feel for surfing in a controlled environment.

IMPORTANT WARNING: Once you go beyond the buoys you are beyond the waters of the Chicago Park District. Doing this is extremely dangerous because if you travel past the buoys you are in navigable waters! This means that you could be in the path of a boat. Remember that boats do not have brakes and cannot stop immediately like cars.

Anytime you are surfing you should follow basic surf etiquette, including:

- (1) Don't take off in front of someone else.
- (2) When paddling out, stay out of the way of riding surfers.
- (3) Don't ride a long board among short board surfers.
- (4) Find your own surf spot.
- (5) It's okay to be a new surfer (everyone is new at some time), but don't be rude – always be considerate of others and help keep everyone safe.

Finally, it is *strongly recommended* you wear a leash at all times and never surf or swim alone because if you get into trouble no one may be there to help. At least bring a friend to hang out on the beach and watch you surf.