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As he puts it, they're known as "coastal border interface hazards," which means sneaker waves happen on the coastline and affect individuals on land.

Meanwhile, beachgoers reaching the deep-end, like fishermen and surfers, are less likely to feel an impact and sometimes will never notice because they appear less intense in the water than on land.

Other times, sneaker waves can be subtle by only reaching the extent of someone's feet or ankles, Newman explained. Though the threat of sneaker waves is much higher in the winter, one of the greater issues amongst the Oregon Coast is its low temperatures ranging between the high 40s and 50s, which can trigger cold water shock during all seasons of the year. In part of this, awareness of what sneaker waves are is essential in prioritizing safety.

"Even if someone is perfectly healthy, their body almost seizes up. Even if they know they need to swim, they can't physically move the muscles, their arms and their legs like

they normally could, and they can end up drowning," he said. "Their body goes into a state of shock going from being perfectly warm to now all of a sudden being very cold."

A useful tool recommended by the NWS to detect and predict sneaker waves is by visiting forecast.weather.gov. At the top left corner of the page, type in "Florence, Oregon" into the search bar. Above the main forecast, look out for the High Surf Advisory or High Surf Warning headline above the main forecast to see if there is a sneaker wave alert before heading to the coast.

"The days when we issue High Surf Advisories, High Surf Warnings or Coastal Flood Warnings



Signs up and down the coast show the beach hazards people should be aware of when they recreate in or near the Pacific Ocean.

are days when the sneaker wave threat is the highest along our coastline," Newman adds.

Another useful way of predicting sneaker waves or generally large waves is by checking marine.weather.gov. According to Newman, look for a swell height rise to 9 ft or higher when its dominant period is 14 seconds or higher in the forecast.

"We would classify that

as a high sneaker wave threat," Newman said.

In previous incidents, logs have crushed beach visitors by rolling down the beach caused by big waves. "It's important to be aware of the number of logs between you and the ocean, as well as how close the water is to reaching them," Newman said. "If the waves are running up and the water is getting to near the logs are on the beach,

it doesn't have to be that deep to start causing that log to roll back down towards the waterline. And if you're between the log and the sea, then that could be over the top of you."

Newman also talked about rip currents. Among the ocean's natural events, rip currents are common along the West Coast and they occur on a daily basis, he said.

These waves are recognized as fast and narrow channels of moving water with powerful undertones moving away from the shore. Different from a sneaker wave, beach visitors swimming or surfing will be the most impacted by the power of rip currents.

Researchers from Oregon State University's oceanic department claim rip currents are difficult to predict, but can be detected by long-shore currents moving from the left and right, based on studies conducted in 2009.

Along with Newman's

observations, he said the areas where the water is moving faster out to sea than other areas is a sign of a rip current.

A natural reaction is to swim towards the shore, but the NWS emphasizes the importance of swimming parallel to the coast and to never fight the current.

"The rip current is stronger than you can swim. That's where people get into trouble, as they try swimming directly toward the shore and wear themselves out and eventually," Newman explained. "Swim parallel to the coast, and if the current is taking you more to the south or more to the north, start swimming in that direction."

He proceeded to suggest it would be easier to swim back to shore once the person has reached 100 feet parallel to the shore outside of the current. In a case where swimming is not possible, the NWS advises people to float or tread water.

As research on sneaker waves and rip currents continue, the NWS recommends to never swim alone, remain calm to conserve energy and to think clearly. If you notice someone in danger, call 911 for help. As the saying goes, never turn your back to the ocean.

For more information and safety tips, visit weather.gov.

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