

## **Ocean Shores Surf Rescue Team to Deactivate This Saturday**

### **Local News**

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OCEAN SHORES, Wash. - The Ocean Shores Surf Rescue Team will be deactivated effective Feb 16, 2013, due to budget cuts. The ten-man Team is made up of six police officers from the Ocean Shores Police Department and four Paramedic/Firefighters from the Ocean Shores Fire Department. They receive a five percent hazardous duty premium. In addition, if not on duty when a call for Surf Rescue comes in, responding team members receive overtime per call and during training sessions. The team's personal water craft were donated, while City taxes paid for each Team member's personal protective equipment. The cost per man averaged just over \$5,000 per year. The Surf Rescue Team has been the first line of defense for water rescues near the shoreline from Protection Island to Moclips. Calls for the Team often involve minors who get in trouble in the surf or boaters whose craft begins to roll and capsize in the surf. Not all calls are in the surf, however. In some cases, boaters on the Lakes get into trouble and require help, as well. Since its beginnings in 1989, the Team has changed and expanded with new advancements in technology and new members. And, the community has lost two of its own during rescues and training, Police Lt. James L. Davis in 1998 and Fire Capt. Robert E. McLaughlin in 2006.

In preparation for deactivating the Surf Rescue Team, the City has ordered additional signs which will be posted at City beach approaches and at fresh water access points. The signs warn that no lifeguard is on duty and that dangerous rip currents can harm the unwary. The signs will be posted prior to the deactivation date. In addition to calling out the Surf Rescue Team for water emergencies close to shore, the 911 center always calls the Coast Guard. The Westport Coast Guard Station will respond, but they are about forty-five minutes by boat from the main Ocean Shores beach approach. They are not, however, capable of operating in the surf. Their boats require about twenty feet of clearance from the sea bottom. The Coast Guard Air Station in Astoria, OR, is capable of water rescues, but is about thirty-five air minutes by air from Ocean Shores when available. The City will seek grants and donations to reactivate the team. Through the generosity of organizations and individuals, the Mayor believes she can gather enough funding to keep the Surf Rescue Team working through the coming months when tourist activity is heaviest in Ocean Shores and the North Beach. The team has also been available throughout the County for water rescues under a mutual-aid agreement with the Sheriff's Office. In the meantime, residents and visitors are urged to be especially careful in the water and to dial 911 immediately in case of a water emergency.