



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
MARINE CORPS FORCES JAPAN  
UNIT 35001  
FPO AP 96373-5001

MARFORJO 5101.1 Ch 1

SAF  
MAR 05 2021

MARINE CORPS FORCES JAPAN ORDER 5101.1 Ch 1

From: Deputy Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Japan  
To: Distribution List

Subj: RECREATIONAL WATER ACTIVITIES

Encl: (1) New page inserts to MARFORJO 5101.1.

1. Situation. To transmit new page inserts to the basic Order.
2. Mission. To update "From:" line and a reference in enclosure (3) of the basic Order.
3. Execution. Remove the letterhead page and page 2 of enclosure (3) and replace with corresponding pages contained in the enclosure.
4. Filing Instructions. File this change in front of the original Order.

*W. J. Bowers*  
W. J. BOWERS

DISTRIBUTION: List A



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
MARINE CORPS FORCES JAPAN  
UNIT 35001  
FPO AP 96373-5001

MARFORJO 5101.1  
SAF  
19 Jan 2021

MARINE CORPS FORCES JAPAN ORDER 5101.1 W/CH 1

From: Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Japan  
To: Distribution List

Subj: RECREATIONAL WATER ACTIVITIES

Ref: (a) MCO 1700.39  
(b) MCO 5100.29C, Volumes 2 and 5  
(c) MCO P5102.1B  
(d) MARADMIN 534/20

Encl: (1) U.S. Military Sea Condition Information for Okinawa  
(2) Hazardous Marine Life  
(3) Water Safety Pamphlet for Okinawa  
(4) Diving Emergency Card

1. Situation. A high number of water-related mishaps involving Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) personnel have occurred in open water in and around Okinawa and Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Iwakuni. A significant percentage of these mishaps resulted in fatalities, and the remainder required military and/or host nation emergency response assistance.

2. Cancellation. III MEF/MCIPAC-MCBBO 5101.1A w/Ch 1.

3. Mission. This Order provides policy and regulations intended to promote safe open water recreation and reduce the number and severity of SOFA-status personnel water-related mishaps in Japan.

4. Execution

a. Commander's Intent and Concept of Operations

(1) Commander's Intent. Marine Corps Forces Japan (MARFORJ) shall preserve military readiness, protect the military force, and promote public safety, publish regulations and policies to ensure SOFA personnel in Japan safely participate in recreational open water activities with proper education, training, and equipment.

(2) Concept of Operations

(a) This Order applies to "recreational open water activities." The following definitions are provided within the context of this Order. "Recreational" is defined as an off-duty activity that is conducted for personal enjoyment. Examples of recreational water activities include, but are not limited to: operating watercraft, swimming, Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) diving, snorkeling, free diving, kite boarding, surfing, stand-up paddle boarding, water jet pack operation, and waterskiing.

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“Open water” is defined as any body of water that is not a swimming pool and exceeds 24 inches in depth. Examples of open water include, but are not limited to: territorial seas, navigable waters, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams.

(b) Paragraphs 4b, 4c(1), and 4c(2) of this Order are lawful general orders. Those who fail to follow paragraphs 4b, 4c(1), and 4c(2) violate the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and may be held accountable under the UCMJ or subject to appropriate administrative action.

(c) MARFORJ members of the civilian component and dependents are reminded of their obligation to support this Order and are strongly encouraged to follow the water safety regulations in subparagraphs 4b, 4c(1), and 4c(2).

(d) The recreational water safety regulations in paragraphs 4b, 4c(1), and 4c(2) shall not be construed to prevent any subordinate commander within MARFORJ or the Director, Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), from establishing Orders or Policies regarding recreational water safety, equipment rental, and related commercial matters. Subordinate Orders and Policies may be published to provide guidance on how to operate, safeguard, and control any Marine Corps Installations Pacific-Marine Corps Base Camp Butler (MCIPAC-MCBB) facility or area; protect public safety on any MCIPAC-MCBB facility or area; or ensure compliance with the laws of Japan.

b. Subordinate Element Missions

(1) Personnel Participating in Recreational Water Activities

(a) Personnel participating in recreational activities in open water shall use the “buddy system” so that two or more persons operate together to monitor and assist each other in the water.

(b) Personnel participating in recreational activities in open water shall comply with restrictions and other requirements associated with applicable sea conditions established by United States military authorities. Personnel shall not enter open water during periods of heavy rains where visibility is reduced, during the presence of thunder and lightning, or when local conditions result in the closure of an open water area. Sea condition information for Okinawa may be obtained by visiting Kadena Weather Flight 18<sup>th</sup> Operations Support Squadron web site at <https://www.kadena.af.mil/Agencies/Local-Weather/>.

(c) In Okinawa, personnel will not enter ocean during “Sea Condition Danger” except under the following conditions:

1. Daytime swimming in designated swim areas on and off military installations when staffed by lifeguards and open for public use.

2. Professionally monitored athletic competitions staffed with trained rescue personnel (e.g., Dragon Boat Races, triathlons, open ocean swims).

3. Aboard Okuma, when the Okuma Commander/Deputy Commander authorizes water activities.

4. Aboard Torii Station, when the Garrison Commander authorizes water activities.

5. Aboard White Beach, when the Commander, Fleet Activities Okinawa authorizes water activities.

6. Professionally monitored water activities supervised by qualified officials of that activity (e.g. deep sea fishing, SCUBA diving and classes hosted by a certified dive professional).

(d) Personnel shall not enter open water without wearing or using safety devices/equipment required by law, regulation, contract, or vendor use policy for their specific water-related activities.

(e) Personnel participating in SCUBA diving in open water must be properly certified or participating in certification training by an internationally recognized recreational SCUBA diver training organization.

(f) Personnel participating in kiteboarding or kitesurfing are required to have completed a certification training program which meets equivalent proficiency of Kiteboarder Level 2F as established by the International Kiteboarding Organization (IKO) or participating in certification training by an IKO certified instructor.

(g) This Order classifies snorkeling and free diving as high-risk activities. As such, military members will review the details of their plan with their unit safety officer prior to engaging in these activities.

(h) To maintain buoyancy and facilitate any necessary rescue, personnel snorkeling and freediving shall wear appropriately-sized vests designed for activity e.g., snorkel vests for snorkeling and freediver recovery vest or snorkel vest for freediving.

(i) To prevent surfboard loss or strikes to others following any “wipeout,” personnel must use surfboard leashes when surfing or wind surfing with any surfboard variation, including longboards, shortboards, and funboards.

(j) Personnel operating or riding on personal watercraft (PWC) (e.g., “Jet Ski” or “Waverunner”) shall wear United States Coast Guard approved, appropriately-sized life vests (or a Japan Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism compliant vest).

(k) Personnel operating personal watercraft shall each use a tethered lanyard or cord to disable the watercraft ignition should the operator fall off.

(l) Personnel operating or riding in sea kayaks, canoes, and other small boats on open water shall wear United States Coast Guard approved, appropriately-sized life vests (or a Japan Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism compliant vest).

(m) Personnel shall not enter open water to participate in recreational activities between the periods of dusk until dawn unless certified and engaged in night time recreational SCUBA diving, participating in certification training by an internationally recognized recreational SCUBA diver training organization, or aboard a registered vessel equipped with a Global Positioning System (GPS), navigation light, and a radio to contact other vessels or emergency response agencies.

(n) Personnel using vectored thrust engine equipment designed to propel users in the air above or at the surface and subsurface of water (e.g., “Flyboards,” “Water Jet Packs,” “Aquaflies,” “Aquaboards,” “Jet Electric Body Board” and “Jetovators”) must follow manufacturer user manual safety and operating instructions and must use manufacturer required and recommended personal protective equipment. This requirement applies to rental equipment regardless of rental contract terms and conditions.

(2) Personnel Participating SCUBA Diving

(a) Certified SCUBA instructors approved by the local MCCA SCUBA Program Office may train, instruct, or certify personnel aboard MCIPAC-MCBB and MCCA Okinawa facilities only when conducting courses for the MCCA SCUBA Program Office per reference (a).

(b) Every MCCA instructional class and MCCA organized dive trip shall have readily available and usable oxygen. To administer emergency oxygen, staff shall have the following: an oxygen cylinder, a delivery device (e.g., a nasal cannula, resuscitation mask, non-rebreather mask or a bag value mask), a regulator with pressure gauge, and flow meter.

(c) Personnel participating in recreational SCUBA diving in open water must be properly certified or participating in certification training by an internationally recognized recreational SCUBA diver training organization.

(d) Each diver will only rent equipment for his or her own personal use (one regulator system, one Buoyancy Compensator Device (BCD) and a maximum of four SCUBA cylinders). An individual may be allowed to rent more than one set of SCUBA life support equipment only if they are:

1. A certified SCUBA instructor approved by MCCA Program Office.
2. A spouse, parent, or legal guardian that is a certified diver renting equipment for a certified minor child or spouse (Certification cards must be presented for each set of dive gear being rented)

(e) It is prohibited to loan, rent, or purchase any SCUBA equipment for/to any individual who is not a certified diver or a student diver enrolled in a course of instruction.

(f) Personnel shall SCUBA dive within their certification level:

1. SCUBA divers with an open water certification shall not exceed a maximum depth of 60 feet.
2. SCUBA divers with an advanced open water certification shall not exceed a maximum depth of 100 feet.
3. Technical SCUBA divers or technical SCUBA divers in training shall not dive deeper than their certification allows.

(g) Required minimum equipment for open water dives:

1. Mask with tempered safety glass lens.
2. Snorkel.
3. Fins.
4. BCD with low pressure inflation system, manual inflation system.
5. Quick release weight system.
6. Gas regulation system first and second stage.
7. Alternate breathing source (e.g., pony bottle, spare air, or octopus).
8. Submersible pressure gauge (either electronic or mechanical) for each cylinder of breathing gas.
9. Depth gauge (either electronic or mechanical) or dive computer.
10. Timing device (watch) or dive computer.
11. Audible signaling device (whistle).
12. Dive tool (either a dive knife or line cutter).
13. Compass.
14. Two dive lights (when participating in night diving).
15. A visual signaling device (e.g., Safety Sausage) (when participating boat diving).

(h) In accordance with reference (b), recreational SCUBA diving is classified as a high-risk activity. As such, military members will review the details of their dive/emergency action plan with their unit safety officer or unit dive club president/vice president prior to engaging in the activity. The plan shall cover rescue protocol, injuries, and medical emergency for each dive location. Personnel shall contact the emergency operator immediately in the event of a water related mishap by dialing 119, if off-base, 911 from an on-base landline, or in Okinawa 098-911-1911 from a cell phone.

(i) Personnel are prohibited from using SCUBA equipment that is unserviceable and poses a risk to the user.

(j) Due to Japan's strict weapons law, personnel are recommended to possess/carry a line cutter vice dive knife. If possessing a dive knife, personnel shall not store dive knives in their vehicle regardless of the knife's length. Dive knives shall only be transported and in the possession of a certified SCUBA diver for the sole purpose of diving on the day of the activity. Dive knives shall be stored in the owner's personal domicile during all other periods. Personnel living in the barracks shall consult their command for policy on possessing/storing diving knives in the barracks.

(k) Personnel are prohibited from recreational SCUBA diving in the following areas:

1. Within 500 yards of Chimu Wan anchorage (Camp Courtney).
2. Within the MCAS Iwakuni port zone and surrounding restricted areas.
3. Within 500 yards of any pier, dock, or wharf in use.
4. Any established swimming beach where SCUBA diving is prohibited by beach regulations.
5. Within 1000 yards of ammunition demilitarization areas.
6. Within any body of fresh water such as a river, lake, reservoir, or dam.
7. Within 500 yards of any sewage or storm outlet.
8. Any underwater overhead environment and enclosed space without direct access to the surface.

c. Coordinating Instructions

(1) General Guidance

(a) MARFORJ commands and activities shall include recreational water safety awareness training as a part of pre-holiday safety talks and stand-downs prior to commencement of liberty.

(b) MARFORJ commands and activities shall report all water-related recreational mishaps and near misses involving active duty personnel in accordance with references (b), (c), and (d).

(c) All water-related mishaps and near misses involving MARFORJ personnel shall be reported within (5) business days to the Safety Director, MCIPAC-MCBB for trend analysis by emailing: MCBButlerBASESAFETYDIRECTOR@usmc.mil or by calling DSN 315-645-3806/2729.

(d) Personnel shall not intentionally touch, cover, uncover, collect, move, or disturb underwater unexploded ordnance. Personnel discovering such ordnance should note its location and report it to local police or military police as soon as practicable.

(e) To prevent risk of shallow water blackouts caused by cerebral hypoxia, personnel shall not intentionally hyperventilate before breath-hold diving or submerging under open water.

(f) Personnel shall not jump, dive, or swing into open water from trees, cliffs, bridges, towers, or any other natural objects or man-made land fixtures higher than 6 feet from the water surface.

(g) Personnel shall not enter open water affected by floods or tsunami waves.

(h) Personnel shall not enter open water while drunk from alcohol or impaired by any controlled substance or prescription drug. The words, “drunk” or “impaired,” mean any intoxication sufficient to impair the rational and full exercise of the mental or physical faculties.

(i) Personnel shall not enter open water from closed beaches or waterfront areas.

(j) Personnel shall not enter on or in frozen open water.

(2) Laws of Japan

(a) All MARFORJ personnel shall be licensed in accordance with the laws of Japan to operate privately-owned boats and/or PWC's.

(b) All MARFORJ personnel shall comply with Japan Fisheries Law and all other water-related regulations enforced by Japan's prefectures.

(3) Open Water Safety Recommendations. As a matter of policy for minimizing safety risk, all MARFORJ personnel in or around open water should:

(a) Learn to swim.

(b) Limit open water recreation to areas under lifeguard supervision when conducting water activities with novice swimmers.

(c) Supervise young children and novice swimmers under their care at all times and, when in open water, be within an arm's reach.

(d) Before participating in water activities, notify family members, friends, or command representatives of their locations and expected return times and dates.

(e) Have immediately available or possess a cellular phone sealed in a buoyant, water-proof pouch. The phone should list preprogrammed emergency phone numbers.

(f) Stay away from coastlines during hazardous surf, typhoon conditions, and tsunami warnings.

(g) Wear head protection while surfing to guard against injuries from shallow reefs in the surf zone.

(h) Take a SCUBA review class prior to diving if a certified diver is inactive from the sport for several months.

(i) If new to local waters, certified divers should consider signing up for a "Discover Local Diving" excursion with a certified dive master to gain valuable experience and to mitigate the potential for mishaps.

(j) Not touch coral and hazardous marine life, including sea anemone, cone shells, box jellyfish, blue ringed octopi, sea urchins, crown of thorns, moray eels, fire coral, sea snakes, hydroids, stonefish, lionfish, barracuda, sharks, and Portuguese man-of-war.

(k) Be certified or trained in basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.



(I) Refrain from accessing fresh bodies of water north of Camp Hansen for recreational purposes which involve bodily entry into the water, due to the presence of leptospirosis and the risk it poses to humans.

5. Administration and Logistics

a. MARFORJ Battalion and Squadron Commanders. Ensure copies of this Order are posted on work center safety read boards and the recreational water safety regulations in paragraphs 4b, 4c(1), and 4c(2) are incorporated into unit recreation off-duty safety standard operating procedures.

b. Stakeholders. Stakeholders shall be provided an opportunity to concur or non-concur prior to revision or cancellation of this Order. Stakeholders for this Order are as follows:

- (1) Safety Director, III Marine Expeditionary Force
- (2) Safety Director, MCIPAC-MCBB
- (3) Safety Director, Marine Corps Air Station Futenma
- (4) Safety Director, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni
- (5) Safety Director, Combined Arms Training Center, Camp Fui
- (6) Staff Judge Advocate, III Marine Expeditionary Force
- (7) Staff Judge Advocate, MCIPAC-MCBB
- (8) Pacific Area Counsel, MCIPAC-MCBB
- (9) MCCA Okinawa Tsunami SCUBA Program Manager

6. Command and Signal

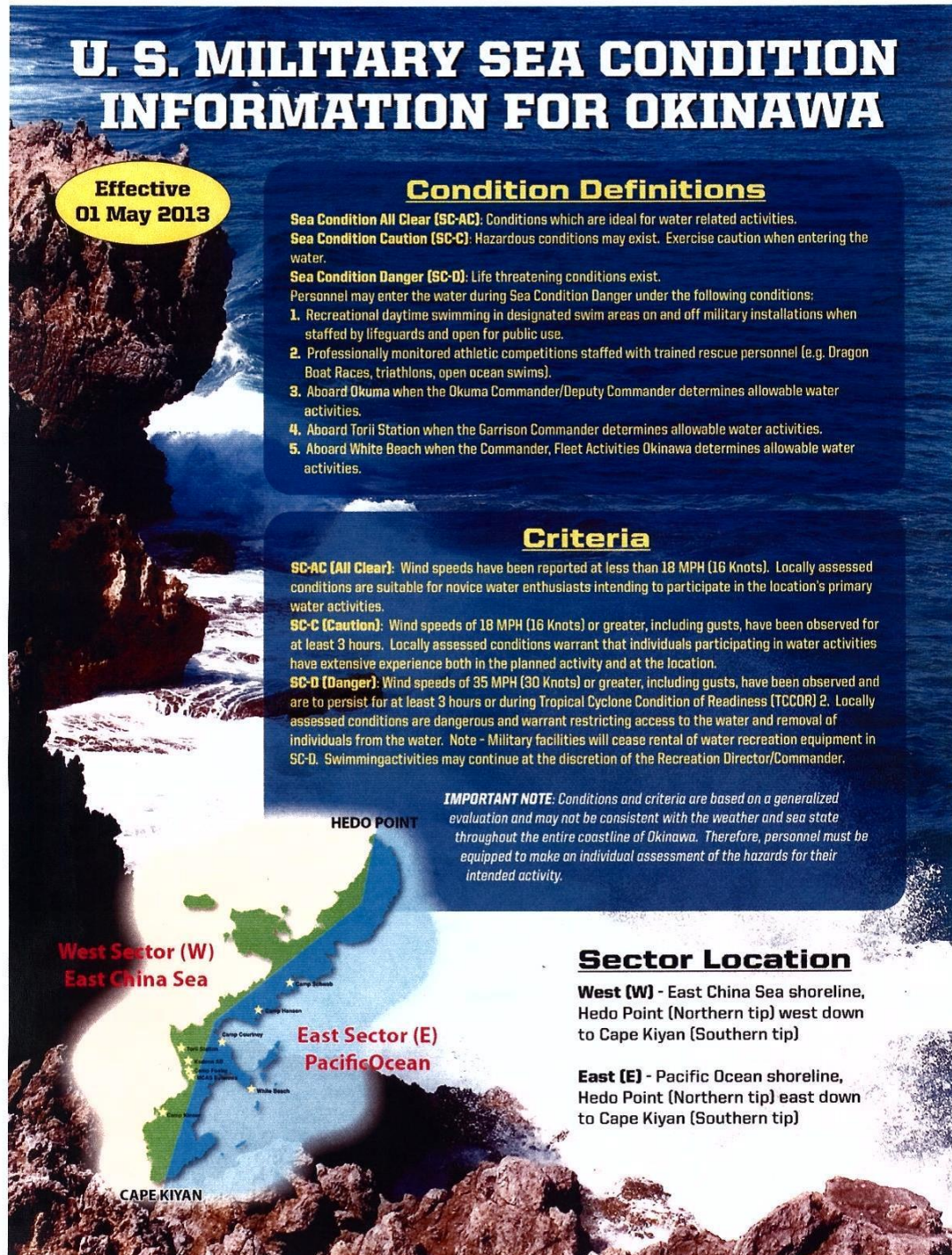
a. Command. This Order is applicable to members of the United States Armed Forces, members of the civilian component, and dependents assigned or attached to MARFORJ activities.

b. Signal. This Order is effective the date signed.

  
W. J. BOWERS  
Deputy

DISTRIBUTION: III MEF Lists I, II  
MCIPAC-MCBB List B

## U.S. Military Sea Condition Information For Okinawa



# U. S. MILITARY SEA CONDITION INFORMATION FOR OKINAWA

**Effective  
01 May 2013**

### Condition Definitions

**Sea Condition All Clear (SC-AC):** Conditions which are ideal for water related activities.

**Sea Condition Caution (SC-C):** Hazardous conditions may exist. Exercise caution when entering the water.

**Sea Condition Danger (SC-D):** Life threatening conditions exist. Personnel may enter the water during Sea Condition Danger under the following conditions:

1. Recreational daytime swimming in designated swim areas on and off military installations when staffed by lifeguards and open for public use.
2. Professionally monitored athletic competitions staffed with trained rescue personnel (e.g. Dragon Boat Races, triathlons, open ocean swims).
3. Aboard Okuma when the Okuma Commander/Deputy Commander determines allowable water activities.
4. Aboard Torii Station when the Garrison Commander determines allowable water activities.
5. Aboard White Beach when the Commander, Fleet Activities Okinawa determines allowable water activities.

### Criteria

**SC-AC (All Clear):** Wind speeds have been reported at less than 18 MPH (16 Knots). Locally assessed conditions are suitable for novice water enthusiasts intending to participate in the location's primary water activities.

**SC-C (Caution):** Wind speeds of 18 MPH (16 Knots) or greater, including gusts, have been observed for at least 3 hours. Locally assessed conditions warrant that individuals participating in water activities have extensive experience both in the planned activity and at the location.


**SC-D (Danger):** Wind speeds of 35 MPH (30 Knots) or greater, including gusts, have been observed and are to persist for at least 3 hours or during Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness (TCCOR) 2. Locally assessed conditions are dangerous and warrant restricting access to the water and removal of individuals from the water. Note - Military facilities will cease rental of water recreation equipment in SC-D. Swimming activities may continue at the discretion of the Recreation Director/Commander.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Conditions and criteria are based on a generalized evaluation and may not be consistent with the weather and sea state throughout the entire coastline of Okinawa. Therefore, personnel must be equipped to make an individual assessment of the hazards for their intended activity.

### Sector Location

**West (W) - East China Sea shoreline,**  
Hedo Point (Northern tip) west down to Cape Kiyan (Southern tip)

**East (E) - Pacific Ocean shoreline,**  
Hedo Point (Northern tip) east down to Cape Kiyan (Southern tip)





# Hazardous Marine Life

Hazardous marine life in the waters of Okinawa is the same as you will find in sub-tropical areas of the Pacific. Prior to entering the water, personnel should familiarize themselves with the common reef inhabitants.

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## STONEFISH

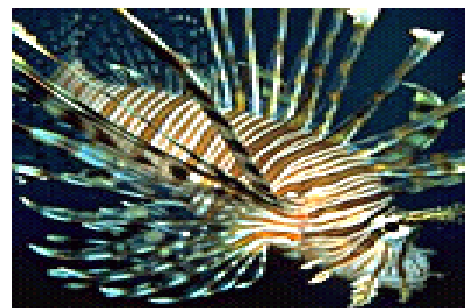
The chances of being stung by a stonefish, probably the most dangerous fish in Okinawa waters, are fortunately not great enough to justify staying out of the ocean. The main concern is that recognizing a stonefish, even if it is right in front of your eyes, is very difficult. Their camouflage is incredibly effective and only observers with a trained eye are likely to see them. Given this natural disadvantage, there are several things that you can do to reduce the likelihood of standing on, sitting on, or accidentally touching one of these highly poisonous fish. One should always wear thick-soled shoes, dive boots or reef-walking shoes while treading on the bottom. Whenever possible, swim rather than walk, thus reducing damage to the marine life and lessening the danger of being stung by a stonefish. When walking, it is a good idea to shuffle one foot in front of the other rather than to take big strides in which each foot is raised up and then placed down onto the sea bed with the risk of landing on a stonefish. The shuffle motion will increase the likelihood that you scare a stonefish away from your tracks rather than stepping on its potentially lethal spines. If a person is injured by a stonefish seek medical attention without delay.



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## LIONFISH

Lionfish are beautiful and deadly. Their feather-like fins are brightly-colored and tipped with strong venom. Lionfish are secretive, hiding under ledges and in caves during the day. They are nocturnal predators, actively feeding at night. Lionfish feed on crabs, shrimps and small fish. A sting from a Lionfish is extremely painful, and victims must seek medical attention immediately. Soaking the limb in very hot water is recommended for first aid. Lionfish are popular aquarium pets. Caution should be used if you plan on keeping one as a pet. If a person is suspected to have been injured by a lionfish seek medical attention without delay.



### **CONE SNAILS**

In the dynamic marine environments in which the cone snail resides, it has been necessary for these snails to develop an effective mechanism for immobilizing their otherwise speedy prey. The solution to the snail's lack of physical agility has been the development of a highly potent concoction of toxins that it uses to paralyze its prey. Upon contact with the prey, the snail impales a harpoon like tooth into any exposed tissue and injects the venom. Some species of cone snails can cause serious injuries and even death to humans. If you collect seashells do so with great care. If a person is suspected to have been injured by a cone snail seek medical attention without delay.



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### **SEA SNAKES**

Sea snakes inhabit the tropical waters of the Indo-Pacific and are highly venomous. Sea snakes have flattened tails for swimming and have valves over their nostrils that are closed underwater. Due to their need to breathe air, they are usually found in shallow water where they swim about the bottom feeding on fish, fish eggs and eels. Sea snakes may be inquisitive but are not considered aggressive unless threatened such as when caught in fishing net or handled roughly. If a snake should approach do not panic, simply swim away. Very few sea snake bites occur around the world and those that do usually happen on trawlers, when the snakes are sometimes hauled in with the catch. Someone suspected of being bitten should be taken to the hospital without delay.



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### **SEA URCHINS**

Sea urchins are spiny little creatures that live along the bottom of virtually all-inshore areas of the ocean. There are several different types in Okinawa, some with short stubby spines, some with long brittle spines, and many also have venom. Generally you don't have to worry too much if you are standing on sand; these creatures like the reef and rocks. Stepping on or even touching a urchin can not only drive a spine into flesh, but the spines are so brittle that they often break off in the wound and become infected easily. Use reef walker type shoes or dive boots while walking in shallow water or along the shoreline. Do not stand or walk on coral. Not only do you kill the coral, but this is also a favorite place for sea urchins to live. Should you ever find that you have stepped on a sea urchin, and



have a spine embedded in your skin, do not try to remove the spine with a needle or tweezers. This could cause the spine to break and become more difficult to remove. The safest course of action is to seek medical attention.

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### **CROWN OF THORN STARFISH**

The only starfish on Okinawa to look out for would be the crown-of-thorns starfish. Their bodies are covered with sharp, pointed spines that have venom. Stepping on or bumping against these creatures will result in the spines penetrating the skin and venom injection. The pain can be intense, severe reaction may result in nausea and vomiting or shock. You may need to seek medical treatment.



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### **BLUE RINGED OCTOPUS**

The blue ringed octopus is small and rarely is larger than a few inches from the tip of one tentacle across to the tip of the opposite tentacle. It is normally light colored with dark brown bands over each of its eight arms and body, with blue circles superimposed on the dark brown bands. When the octopus is threatened the rings turn a brilliant electric-blue color, and it is this change that gives the animal its name.

The blue ringed octopus is very poisonous and should never be handled. The octopus has a parrot-like beak that contains a poison that could cause respiratory paralysis. Fortunately, your chance of seeing a blue ringed octopus is not likely. However, a child could mistakenly pick up this interesting looking octopus while searching through a tide pool. Parents should keep a very watchful eye on the things children pick up while at the ocean. Someone suspected of being bitten should be taken to the hospital without delay.



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### **BOX JELLYFISH**

What is the most poisonous marine animal known to man? Well, some say the box jellyfish (locally known as the habu kurage) and perhaps for good reason. The sting from this creature is very painful and could possibly be life threatening. May through September is a time when the waters surrounding Okinawa become very warm, and along with this warmth brings increase sightings of jellyfish. When heading to the ocean during periods when jellyfish may be abundant use these common sense preventive measures:



- If jellyfish are washed-up on shore do not enter the water.
- Do not touch a jellyfish even though it is dead. The tentacles can still sting.

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### **FIRE CORAL**

Coral is extremely sharp and the most delicate coral is often the most dangerous because of their razor-sharp edges. Coral cuts, while usually fairly superficial, take a long time to heal and can cause temporary disability. The smallest cut, if left untreated, can develop into a skin ulcer. Secondary infections often occur and may be recognized by the presence of a red and tender area surrounding the wound. All coral cuts should receive medical attention. Some varieties of coral (fire coral) can actually sting a diver since coral is a coelenterate like jellyfish. Some of the soft coral of the genus *Palythoa* have been found to contain the deadliest poison known to man. This poison is found within the body of the organism and not in the stinging nematocysts. The slime of this coral may cause a serious skin reaction (dermatitis) or even be fatal if exposed to an open wound. No antidote is known. If injured from contact with coral, clean wound with liberal amounts of fresh water and seek medical attention.



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### **MORAY EEL**

Eels are commonly found in holes and crevices or under rocks and coral. It is snake-like in both appearance and movement and has tough, leathery skin. It can grow to a length of 15 feet and has prominent teeth. Bites frequently result from reaching into a crevice or hole occupied by the eel. It is a vicious biter and may be difficult to dislodge after a bite is initiated. Bites from moray eels may vary from multiple small puncture wounds to the tearing, jagged type with profuse bleeding if there has been a struggle. Extreme care should be used when reaching into holes or crevices. Avoid provoking or attempting to dislodge an eel from its hole.



### **BARRACUDA**

Approximately 10 species of barracuda inhabit the waters of Okinawa. The barracuda is a long, thin fish with prominent jaws and teeth, silver to blue in color, with a large head and a V-shaped tail. It may grow up to 10 feet long and is a fast swimmer, capable of striking rapidly and fiercely. They have been known to attack surface swimmers and limbs dangling in the water. Barracuda wounds can be distinguished from those of a shark by the tooth pattern. A barracuda leaves straight or V-shaped wounds while those of a shark are curved like the shape of its jaws. Life threatening attacks by barracuda are rare. Barracuda are attracted by any bright object. Avoid wearing shiny equipment or jewelry (wedding rings or earrings).

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### **SHARKS**

Attacks on humans are infrequent. There have been no recorded shark attacks on swimmers or divers in Okinawan waters. Since 1965, the annual recorded number of attacks ranges from 40 to 100 worldwide with the majority occurring along the Florida coastline. Attacks, though rare, are usually provoked when the animal feels threatened. Injuries may result not only from bites, but also by coming in contact with the shark's skin. Shark skin is covered with very sharp dentine appendages, called denticles, which are reinforced with tooth-like centers. Contact with shark skin can lead to wide abrasions and heavy bleeding. Pre-attack behavior by most sharks is somewhat predictable. A shark preparing to attack swims with an exaggerated motion, its pectoral fins pointing down in contrast to the usual flared out position, and it swims in circles of decreasing radius around the prey.





## Water Safety Pamphlet For Okinawa

### Know and Understand the Sea Conditions.



- ♦ **Sea Condition All Clear (SC-AC):** Conditions which are ideal for water related activities. Locally assessed conditions are suitable for novice water enthusiasts.
- ♦ **Sea Conditions Caution (SC-C):** Hazardous conditions may exist. Exercise caution when entering the water. Locally assessed conditions warrant personnel to have extensive experience in both the planned activity and at the location.
- ♦ **Sea Condition Danger (SC-D):** Life threatening conditions exist and warrant restricting access to the water and removal of personnel from the water. Military facilities cease rental of water recreation equipment.

*Important Note: Conditions and criteria are based on a generalized evaluation and may not be consistent with the weather and sea state throughout the entire coastline of Okinawa. Therefore, personnel must be equipped to make an individual assessment of the hazards for their intended activity.*

### Access Important Information Before Heading to the Beach!

The Installation Safety Office has a webpage dedicated to water safety on Okinawa, including links to current sea conditions, warning criteria, and other valuable information for safe water activities.

Save the website as a shortcut on your smartphone home screen by visiting <https://www.mcbbutler.marines.mil/Base-Information/Base-Safety/Water-Safety/>, then clicking to add to your home screen.



Installation Safety Office, MCIPAC-MCB  
Butler  
Bldg. 5831, Camp Foster  
Phone: DSN 315-645-3806

## WATER SAFETY



Life Jackets Worn...  
**Nobody Mourns**





### *What to know when recreating in Okinawa's Waters*

- Information presented in this pamphlet offers the military community best safety practices when recreating in and around the waters of Okinawa. Comments, questions or recommendations regarding its content should be addressed to the Director of Safety, Marine Corps Installations Pacific-Marine Corps Base Butler at DSN 645-3806.


- Okinawa is a semi-tropical island surrounded by world class beaches. The island has a moderate climate with an average annual temperature of 73 degrees Fahrenheit. Okinawa thrives from the popular tourism industry and is considered a "hot bed" for a variety of recreational water activities.

- When entering coastal waters, pay close attention to ocean conditions as they can change for the worst in a matter of minutes. Additionally, adhere to posted warning signs and inform others of where you are going and your expected time of return.

- Water enthusiasts should use extreme caution as rip currents are widely present throughout the islands coastline due to the unique coral formations.


- Stay safe, enjoy your tour and ensure you take time to view the joint services water safety video and read the current edition of MARFORJ ORDER 5101.1 prior to heading to the beach!

**WATCH OUT FOR**



**RIP CURRENTS**

Break the Grip of the Rip!



[www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov](http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov)

*A rip current is a strong, localized, and narrow current of water which moves directly away from the shore, cutting through the lines of breaking waves like a river running out to sea, and is strongest near the surface of the water.*

*Visit the Installation Safety Office webpage for more information on rip currents and to download a map of known rip current locations on Okinawa.*



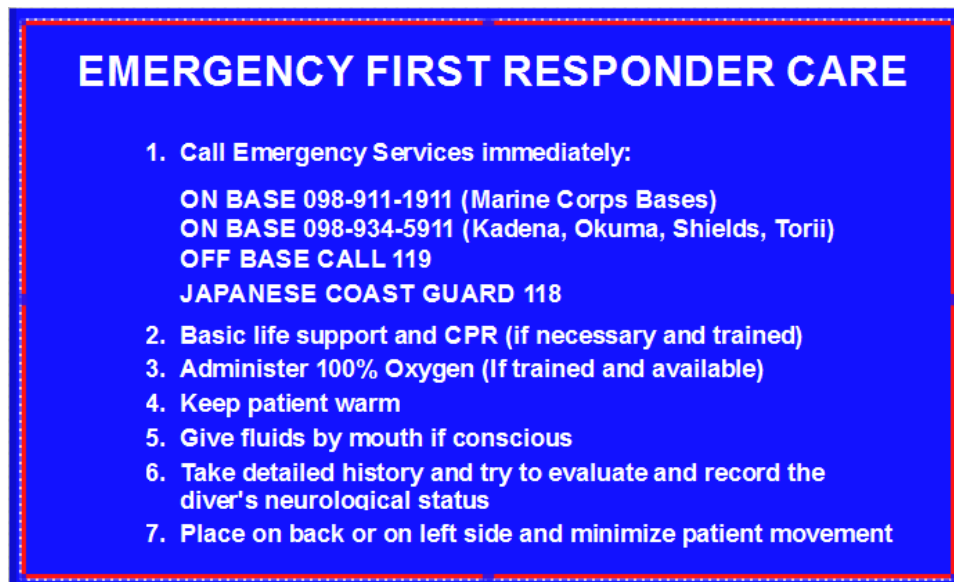
*Okinawa has some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Before you enjoy the surrounding waters, understand the hazards and take proper precautions.*

- Non-swimmers should use Coast Guard approved flotation vests.
- Do not swim alone—always take a buddy with you.
- STAY SOBER—Do not swim while under the influence of alcohol or medication.
- Wear appropriately sized snorkel vest when snorkeling.
- Do not swim during elevated sea conditions.
- Do not jump/dive/swing into open water from objects higher than 6 feet from the waters surface.
- Do not swim between dusk to dawn in open ocean.

# Diving Emergency Card



FRONT



BACK