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At your own risk

Swimming in Shore’s unguarded waters can have deadly results

Jean Mikle
Asbury Park Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

After two drowning deaths in the past week after lifeguards had gone off duty at Jersey Shore beaches, coastal town officials are again warning people to swim only on guarded beaches, as high rip current risks and rough surf is again likely this week.
“We’re here during the day, 9-5, 9-6 on weekends,” said Jake Niedenstein, assistant lifeguard chief in Bradley Beach. “Please, only swim while lifeguards are on duty. Don’t even go in the water after we get off. It’s not worth it.”
Niedenstein’s plea echoes that of other local lifeguards and first responders, who repeatedly beg people not to swim off-hours, often to no avail. After a 31-year-old Trenton man drowned shortly before 7 p.m. Aug. 11 in Seaside Heights, Mayor Anthony Vaz said the borough planned to shut down beaches at 5 p.m. on days when the surf is considered particularly dangerous.

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Hero saves one sister, but Belmar drowning death haunts his rescue

Charles Daye
Asbury Park Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

BELMAR – Thomas Walsh had just finished bodysurfing in the ocean, and was washing off in the beach shower when two women came running up to him, frantic.
“Where are the lifeguards!?” the women yelled at him. “There is a girl, possibly drowning.”
It was early Friday night. The rip current was strong, so strong that even experienced swimmers were having trouble as they swam in the water.
Walsh, a retired Monmouth County correctional police officer, rushed back into the ocean, hoping the women were mistaken. Unfortunately, they weren’t – a 13-year-old girl drowned in the ocean, but Walsh was able to save her younger sister.
“This woman said possibly drowning and I am hoping she is wrong ... and these girls got out of the water,” Walsh said, adding that he never saw the girls in the water when he was bodysurfing.

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INSIDE: HURRICANE ERIN IS HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY BUT STILL A THREAT. 3A

Lifeguards at the 68th Avenue Beach in Long Beach Township stay sheltered under their chair as waves crash into the coastline on the morning of Monday, Aug. 18. THOMAS P. COSTELLO/ASBURY PARK PRESS

Holtec plans
4 reactors at
Oyster Creek

Camden firm also proposes solar field and battery storage project

Amanda Oglesby
Asbury Park Press | USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

LACEY – A Camden-based nuclear plant manufacturing company wants to build four new nuclear reactors, a solar energy field and utility-scale battery storage at the site of the former Oyster Creek Generating Station.

Four small modular reactors, or SMRs, would be constructed alongside a large solar field and battery storage center on the 700-acre Lacey property, Holtec International CEO Krishna “Kris” Singh told a joint energy and environment committee of state senators and assembly members last week.

Holtec, one of the world’s largest nuclear energy component manufacturers, purchased the former nuclear plant and its property in 2019 and has been decommissioning the 1960s-era nuclear facility.

Holtec sees the property as an excellent location for a new power project because of Lacey’s existing transmission line connections to the larger electrical grid.

Holtec is deploying its small modular reactors, or SMR-300s, at the Palisades Nuclear Plant in Covert, Michigan. The company said Oyster Creek’s project, if permitted and approved, would follow Michigan’s.

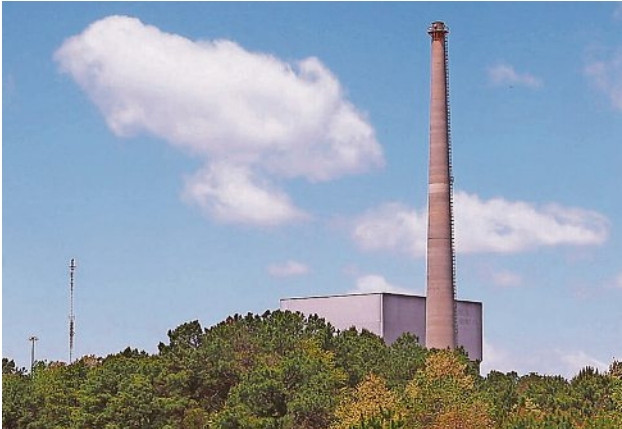
“The SMR-300 is walk-away safe. It has absolutely no risk,” Singh told the joint Senate and Assembly environmental committees last week.

The U.S. Department of Energy is offering grants to manufacturers to develop new small modular reactor designs and describes SMRs as “safe, clean, and affordable nuclear power options” on the agency website.

Singh said the SMR-300 is safer than traditional nuclear energy, because SMRs use passive cooling systems to control the reactors, rather than pumps and motors, that can fail.

“It’s a whole new technology that we are getting ready to install (in Michigan),” he said.

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The defunct Oyster Creek Generating Station, shown in this 2019 photo, is being considered as an ideal location for a future power plant consisting of four small modular nuclear reactors and a solar field. DOUG HOOD/ASBURY PARK PRESS

Schools adopt cell phone limits amid state inaction

Marsha A. Stoltz
NorthJersey.com | USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

With the school year just weeks away, New Jersey districts are improvising how to control student cell phone use while awaiting state action on bills intended to create uniform policy guidelines.

Gov. Phil Murphy called for a statewide ban on cell phones in public schools during his State of the State address in January. The resulting bills, S3695/A4882,

however, if approved, will only instruct the state commissioner of education to develop guidelines within 90 days of the bill’s enactment.

Some school districts, such as Ramsey, rather than wait for the state to take action, have taken matters into their own hands and enacted policies on how to keep cell phones out of students’ hands during the school day. Other districts are following suit.

The Senate bill passed in January, and the Assembly bill was reported out of its Education Committee

with amendments in March for a second reading. No further action has been reported.

Meanwhile, Murphy has proposed the creation of a \$3 million Phone-Free Schools Grant Program through the state Department of Education to be released “later this year.” New York State’s budget for school districts that need financial help purchasing cell phone storage equipment is \$13.5 million.

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