



For Immediate Release

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South Haven Enacts Ordinance to Promote Beach and Pier Safety
Violators Will Incur a Municipal Civil Infraction, \$1,000 Fine

South Haven, Michigan, May 16, 2022 – In advance of the upcoming beach season, the city of South Haven has enacted a new ordinance that aggressively promotes beach and pier safety.

The ordinance, adopted in January, gives the city broad authority to close beaches and piers when conditions are unsafe. Violators face a \$1,000 fine and civil infraction for ignoring the ordinance, which also prohibits diving or jumping from a pier.

“By passing this ordinance, we are taking an aggressive stance on water safety.” South Haven City Manager Kate Hosier said. “Not only are swimmers and beachgoers at risk when they disregard warning signs, their actions put first responders and rescue teams in harm’s way, too.”

“South Haven is taking a proactive step to ensure we can all enjoy a safe beach season. We invite beachgoers to enjoy the natural beauty our City offers while being mindful of safety warnings – and aware of the consequences of their actions.”

The ordinance prohibits individuals from entering or attempting to enter the water when a beach is closed. The law gives authority to the city manager, police chief, harbor master and the director of the South Haven Area Emergency Services Authority to close or partially close public beach waters due to any of the following safety risks:

- Contamination
- Unsafe debris washing ashore
- Rescue and recovery efforts
- Severe weather event identified by the National Weather Service
- Waves exceeding 8 feet in height

Signs will be posted around closed areas indicating that entry into the water is prohibited. When the closure is due to severe weather or wave height, this prohibition does not apply to individuals participating in the following recreational water activities such as:

- Surfing
- Longboarding, shortboarding or any type wave riding board
- Kiteboarding
- Body or “boogie” boarding with swim fins
- Skim boarding

The activities listed above are allowed at the individuals own risk. Surfers and boarders must adhere to safety rules and procedures including controlling boards, using a safety leash and wearing weather-appropriate clothing.

The ordinance also prohibits entering a Lake Michigan pier when it is closed. South Haven is working to install signs and barricades to support enforcement efforts.

Additionally, it is illegal for individuals to dive, jump or swim within 50 feet of a Lake Michigan pier. This provision also includes pushing or shoving any person from a pier into Lake Michigan or the Black River.

Each individual violation will receive a municipal civil infraction and be subject to a \$1,000 fine.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/38pD7Ds>.

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