

Safety/Security – April 2024

Bottom Line Up Front:

- Beach Notes – Annual Reminders; **PLEASE share with visitors/renters**
- Ballons
- Croatan Parking Lot
- Lithium Battery Fires - Use the Right Charger
- Off Duty Management
- CAC – Hail Capt. Wessler, Farewell Capt. McBrien

Beach Notes:

Holes: The recent death of a young girl in NC prompts me to remind all not to bury individuals in deep holes. The sides can fall in and suffocate a person, even if their head is above the level of the sand. If you (or your children, or your dog) dig a hole – **PLEASE fill it in!** Sprains and broken bones are no way to spend a vacation.

Sunscreen: Please wear it. It is cheaper and less “yucky” than cancer.

No Diving: Storms, tides, and winds shift the bottom sand off of Croatan Beach on a daily basis. Whether on a board or swimming, diving into the water can break your neck leading to paralysis or death. We average one permanent injury per year – don’t be that one!

Dunes: Please stay off the dunes. Not only does city ordinance forbid it, but the damaged dunes may reveal dangerous metal stakes only upon stepping, falling, or sliding onto one.

Dogs: Plastic bags for picking up after one’s pet are available at each beach entrance, as are trash barrels. No excuses.

Rip Currents: Usually announced by red flags flying at lifeguard stations. If pulled out to sea by a rip current, do not try to swim against the current. Rather, swim parallel to the shore until out of the current and then return to safety. Don’t swim alone and watch children closely.

Thunder and Lightning: If you hear it or see it, get off the beach. Mother nature can be pretty awesome, but she can also be deadly.

Plastic Kills: please police the beach, especially your area, when you leave. Plastic bottles, sales tags from chairs, umbrellas, etc., straws, zip ties, and the like can kill marine mammals, sea turtles, fish, and aquatic birds. Please pick it up and throw it away.

Dangers in the Sand: Broken glass, discarded fishing tackle, and rusted metal are perennial hazards. A new add to the list is High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE), a waste by-product of the off-shore wind-farm cabling installation. Its black shards are hard, sharp, and can easily cut feet and paws. Dominion Energy has promised to reduce its discharge and to comb the beach for debris twice daily, but I’d still watch my step. Please pick up any dangerous detritus you find and discard it properly in trash barrels available at every beach entrance.

Unexploded Ordnance: Military operations have been a daily occurrence in, off of, and above Virginia Beach for more than a century. Submarine and anti-submarine actions occurred within sight of our shores during both World Wars. The question is not “if,” so much as “when and where” unexploded ordnance (UXO) will wash up. Even expended flares can cause serious burns. If you see UXO, **do not touch it**. Keep others away and **call 9-1-1**.

Balloons: Spring ushers in graduations, weddings, and other celebrations. Please ensure that your celebration does not include non-biodegradable balloons (think: mylar and the attached ribbons). Balloons do not fly forever - they have to come down somewhere and it is often in the ocean where marine life can ingest them and die. Virginia State Law imposes a fine of \$25 per balloon on non-biodegradable balloons released by individuals (16-years-old or older).

Croatan Parking Lot: As of April 1, those parking after 10:00 AM started incurring a \$3 VB-Resident (\$7 non-VB resident) fee. Payment is made at kiosks located near the bathhouse. A welcome change is that new provisions allow for reentry the same day without having to repay. Hours of operation are listed as 6:00 AM until 8:00 PM.

Lithium Batteries, Fires, and Chargers: VBFD Chef Kenneth Pravetz assured attendees at a Public Safety Community Meeting on March 20, that lithium batteries are not inherently fire-prone, but cautioned users of all rechargeable devices to ensure that they use the proper charger for the device – not just some aftermarket charger that has a similar plug.

Off Duty Management (ODM) for Security Providers: Those who read my notes in the March CCL Newsletter may recall that I spoke of a new (eff. 04/02/2024) Off-Duty Management (ODM) system for engaging our patrol officers in scheduling their security patrols. I have subsequently learned several nuances of the new system. The key changes are:

- a. New hourly rate will be \$72.15. This is up from \$65/hour we had previously paid.
- b. Blocks of patrol time must be in a minimum of 3-hour increments.
- c. The requestor must specify the time window for the patrol. Heretofore, the officers were allowed to patrol during their “as available” off-duty hours. ODM removes that flexibility.

Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC): The March 13 meeting of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee included a briefing by Captain Michelle Wyatt, VBPD Professional Standards, on the aforementioned ODM system.

Commander of the Second Precinct, **Captain “Dirty” Harry McBrien** will be retiring. He will be replaced by **Captain Bradley Wessler**. Capt. Wessler previously served in the Second Precinct as a lieutenant and is familiar with Croatan. We will Hail & Farewell Captains McBrien and Wessler at the upcoming CAC meeting, to be held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 7:00 PM in the conference room of Virginia Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad #14, 740 VB Blvd (17th Street). Please park on the east side of the building. CAC meetings are open to all.

M. C. “Connie” Agresti,
CCL Safety and Security Director