



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Newport Beach Fire Department
Lifeguard Operations Division





Newport Beach Fire Department - Lifeguard Operations 2020 Annual Report
Design and data analysis by William Koon

2020 IN REVIEW

Chief's Message

Two thousand twenty was a year of challenges, setbacks, and extraordinary efforts in the face of a pandemic. Beach closures placed our lifeguards at the center of a passionate debate during the pandemic. A swell of community support saved the 2020 Junior Guard program. Record heat and crowds in the fall pushed lifeguard activity to historic highs. As the year closed, our lifeguards helped staff one of the first public COVID-19 vaccination clinics in the county.

In the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, our lifeguards showed themselves to be adaptable, resourceful, and resilient. Our lifeguards staffed our City's Emergency Operations center for almost two months assisting in operations, planning, support, and logistics. We trained 33 rookies and 200 returning lifeguards by adding classes, reducing class sizes and using online training.

Newport's beaches became a gathering point under the initial "Stay at Home Order" as other recreational outlets closed or were limited. The conflict between the Stay at Home Order and the desire to be on the beach peaked in late April, captured in one picture (below) -- a crowded beach during a pandemic. The photo set off a debate about beach access and Newport Beach became the focus of national and international press.

When this notoriety led to beach closures, our lifeguards demonstrated safety, service, and professionalism under intense scrutiny and pressure. People, on all sides of the issue, subjected our lifeguards to criticism and outbursts of frustration. Our lifeguards acted with a level of professionalism that reflected well on our department and profession.

As the spring progressed, we were in doubt about the feasibility of running our Junior Lifeguard program. We moved forward with our 37th season, thanks to overwhelming support from our JG families, the City Council, and the City leadership. Our JG staff put together a plan to run the program in three locations with enhanced safety protocols. The program was a success and one of the highlights of the year. We are finalizing plans for a new Junior Lifeguard headquarters, with official approval coming in early 2021.

The summer season started with cool weather and small surf. The exception was the 4th of July Weekend when we had 10-15 ft surf from the south. July 3rd was the busiest day of the summer (*see p 5*). The expected holiday crowds and an outbreak of COVID-19 among a group of our lifeguards prompted the City leadership to close our beaches for the holiday weekend to align with other OC beach closures.

September and October brought record heat and crowds. The weather, telecommuting, and online schooling fueled summer-like beach crowds past Halloween. These conditions resulted in a 12% increase in lifeguard call volume, compared with our five-year average.

The year ended with our seasonal lifeguard staff providing support for the vaccinations of health care workers, public safety, and the public 65 and older. In 2019, I gave a talk at a Lifeguard seminar, describing the effectiveness of lifeguards in a disaster response, based on the skills they use every day on the beach. Watching lifeguards from across the county working together to support the delivery of over 10,000 vaccinations (so far) is one of the proudest moments of my career.

I admire the level of adaptability, service, and professionalism our lifeguards brought to our community in a year of trials, hurdles, and hardships. While 2020 was a terrible year for many, I am so proud of the efforts and achievements of the Newport Beach Lifeguards and consider myself fortunate to be in their ranks.



Mike Halphide
Chief Lifeguard



Clockwise from top left: A crowded Newport Beach on 4/25/20 (photo courtesy of Orange County Register); A Newport Beach Lifeguard on duty at The Wedge; Artist rendition of the future Newport Jr. Lifeguard Headquarters; Lifeguards from multiple Orange County agencies staff a COVID-19 vaccine distribution site

2020 SPECIAL RECOGNITION

**2020 Newport Beach
Seasonal Lifeguard of the Year**

Hayden Paul

Lifeguard II - Balboa
Rookie Summer: 2012

**2020 Newport Beach
Marine Safety Officer of the Year**

Mike Ure

Lifeguard Captain - Training / Jr. Lifeguards
Rookie Summer: 1986

**2020 West Newport
Lifeguard of the Year**

Rhodes Rosenthal

Lifeguard I
Rookie Summer: 2018

**2020 Balboa
Lifeguard of the Year**

Bryan Buck

Lifeguard II
Rookie Summer: 2012

**2020 Corona Del Mar
Lifeguard of the Year**

Will Harrington

Lifeguard I
Rookie Summer: 2020

**2020 Rescue Boat
Lifeguard of the Year**

Gavin Wright

Lifeguard II
Rookie Summer: 2012

**2020 Jr. Lifeguard
Instructor of the Year**

Natalie May

Lifeguard II
Rookie Summer: 2013

**2020 Jr. Lifeguard
Rookie Instructor of the Year**

Justin Boals

Lifeguard I
Rookie Summer: 2018

**2020 Basic Lifeguard
Academy "Top Gun"**

Joseph Mannon

Lifeguard I
Rookie Summer: 2020

**2020 Rookie
Lifeguard of the Year**

Madie Ambrose

Lifeguard I
Rookie Summer: 2020

**2020 Headquarters
Lifeguard of the Year**

Rob Marienthal

Lifeguard II
Rookie Summer: 2007

Scholarships

NBOLA - Don Burns

Former Lifeguard Instructor

Dylan Biggerstaff

Lifeguard I, West Newport
Rookie Summer: 2017

NBOLA - Al Irwin

Former Lifeguard Captain

Caroline Amling

Lifeguard I, Jr. Lifeguard Instructor
Rookie Summer: 2019

NBOLA - Buddy Belshe

Former Lifeguard Captain

Rob Marienthal

Lifeguard II, Headquarters Division
Rookie Summer: 2007

Lifeguard Management Association

Genesis Navarrete

Lifeguard I, Balboa
Rookie Summer: 2010

Brent Ranek - Pay it Forward

Sam Hunter

Lifeguard I, West Newport
Rookie Summer: 2007



7/3/20 - A DAY TO REMEMBER

On July 3, 2020, the swell of the season rolled into Newport Beach. A long-period southern-hemisphere swell hit with 10-15 foot waves. A crowd of 85,000 was exceptional for a Friday, in anticipation of the beach closures scheduled for the holiday weekend. Newport lifeguards made 2,700 preventative actions and 101 ocean rescues on the 3rd, but one ocean rescue stood out.

Lifeguard Sean Richards made a rescue, bringing a swimmer through the Balboa pier. After exiting the water, he spotted another swimmer getting swept down the beach by the 10-foot surf. When Sean brought the second swimmer through the pilings, both victim and rescuer ricocheted off the pier. He completed the save, handing off the victim to his back-up lifeguards. Exhausted by two harrowing rescues and a beating by the surf and pier, Sean collapsed on the beach. He was transported to the hospital and held

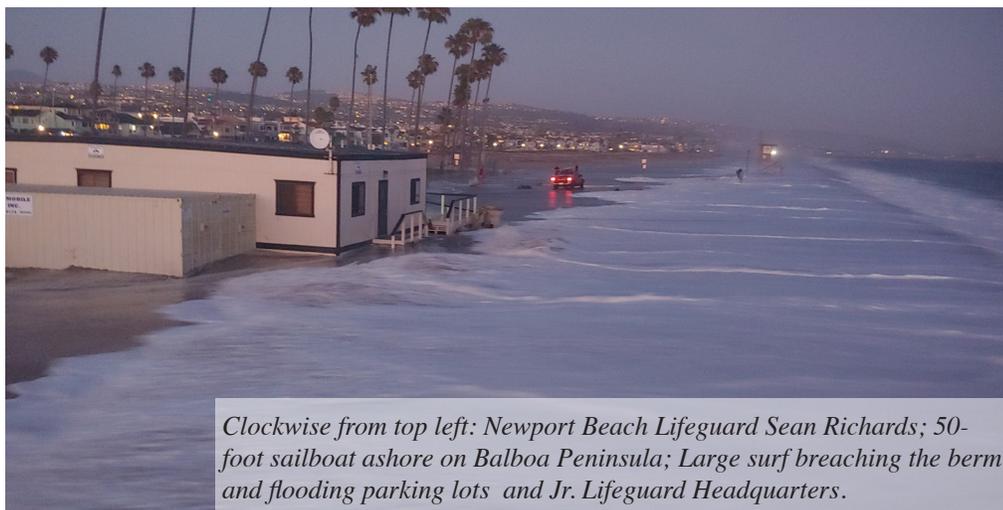
for observation for several hours. Sean recovered but was battered and bruised for the next few days. Coming so close to the July 6th anniversary of Ben Carlson's last rescue, we breathed a collective sigh of relief, knowing that we were lucky that this turned out with everyone OK.

The Newport Beach City Council commended Sean for *"Courageous actions performed during hazardous ocean conditions that saved two lives"*. Sean was also recognized by the California and United States Surf Lifesaving Associations for his heroic act.

As evening fell on the third, the surf continued to build and created flooding on the Balboa peninsula, with waves rolling over the beach and across Balboa Blvd and reaching the bay. The flooding blocked traffic, submerged vehicles, and caused some damage to the Junior Lifeguard headquarters.

The day continued to deliver havoc when lifeguards received a report of a 50-foot sailboat run aground on the peninsula after dark. When lifeguards arrived on the scene, the passengers had safely made it to shore. Lifeguards scrapped their initial plan to rescue the boat after deeming it too dangerous, as waves began breaking over the hull. Within ten minutes of arriving on the scene, the hull cracked. Five minutes later, the boat completely disintegrated in the pounding surf. Several days later, lifeguards aided a salvage company and City Public Works crews in recovering the boat's mast and keel more than a mile up the beach.

On the following day, Newport's beaches were officially closed. The crowds and activity were light. As the rest of the summer passed, the Pacific Ocean lived up to its name. There were no other large swells or busy days that came close to July 3.



Clockwise from top left: Newport Beach Lifeguard Sean Richards; 50-foot sailboat ashore on Balboa Peninsula; Large surf breaching the berm and flooding parking lots and Jr. Lifeguard Headquarters.

As a lifeguard, we hear stories of the "big days" and massive swells. When working on one of these epic days, we realize why lifeguards love what we do. It's the teamwork, skill, danger, and bravery that create lifelong camaraderie among lifeguards. We recognize our higher purpose on those days. We grow to understand and personify the slogan **"Lifeguards for Life."**

-Mike Halphide

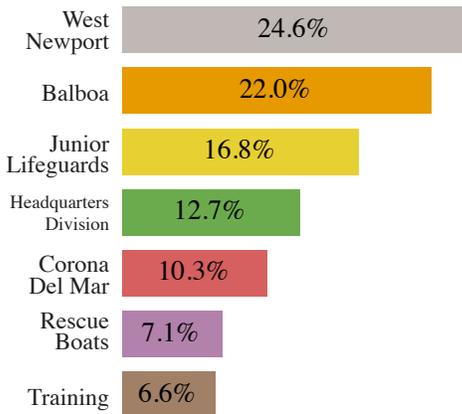
2020 CONDITIONS & STAFFING

LIFEGUARD COVERAGE

98,338

2020 Total Lifeguard Patrol Hours

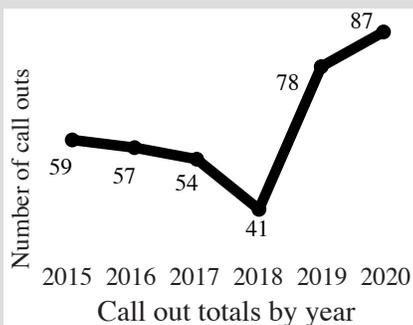
Patrol hours are when lifeguards are actively watching the water or capable of responding to an emergency in their assigned division. Excluded are hours for training, meetings, administrative duties and night-time standby.



% of 2020 patrol hours by division

Nighttime Call Out Response

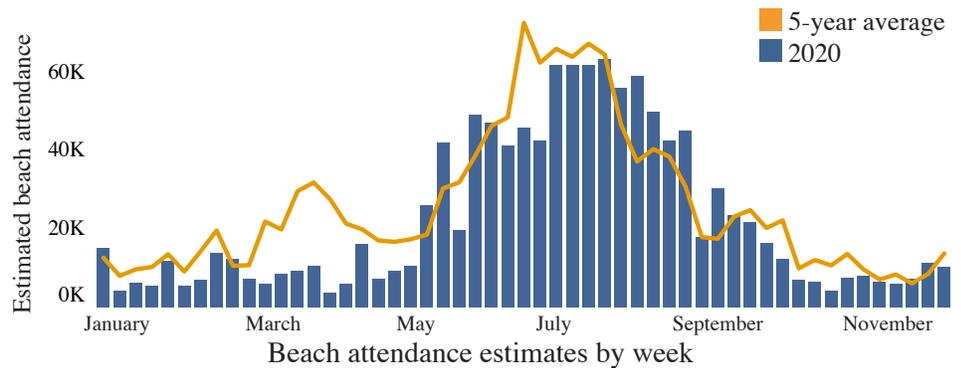
Lifeguards provide 24-hour response in the Newport Beach, and are frequently called out for incidents occurring outside of patrol hours. Lifeguards were called to **87** nighttime emergencies in 2020.



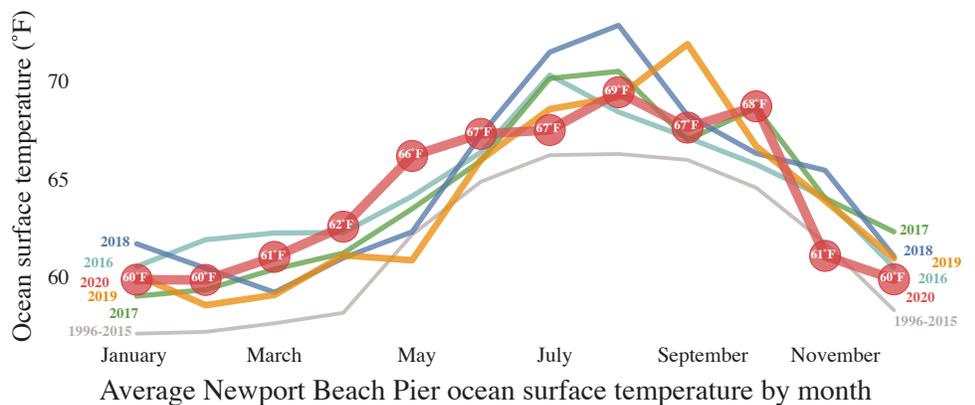
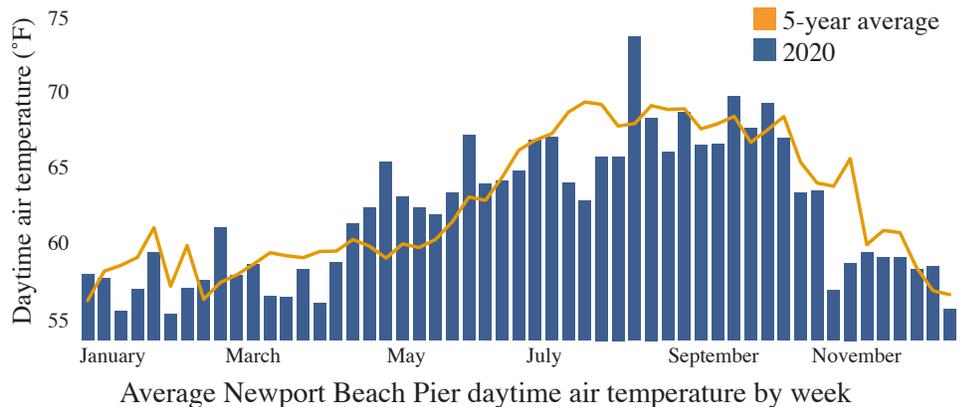
VISITATION

8,261,050

Estimated 2020 Beach Attendance



WEATHER & OCEAN CONDITIONS



77.3 °F August 21 & 23, 2020: warmest recorded surface water temperature in Newport Beach (records started in 1924).

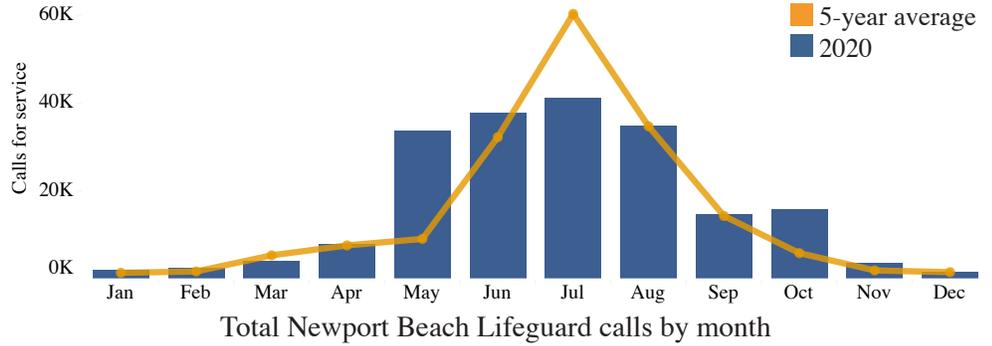
Water temperature data from Shore Stations Program with current funding provided by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Boating and Waterways, Award#C1670003. Daily temperature data are collected by the Newport Beach Lifeguards with the City of Newport Beach.

2020 LIFEGUARD ACTIVITY

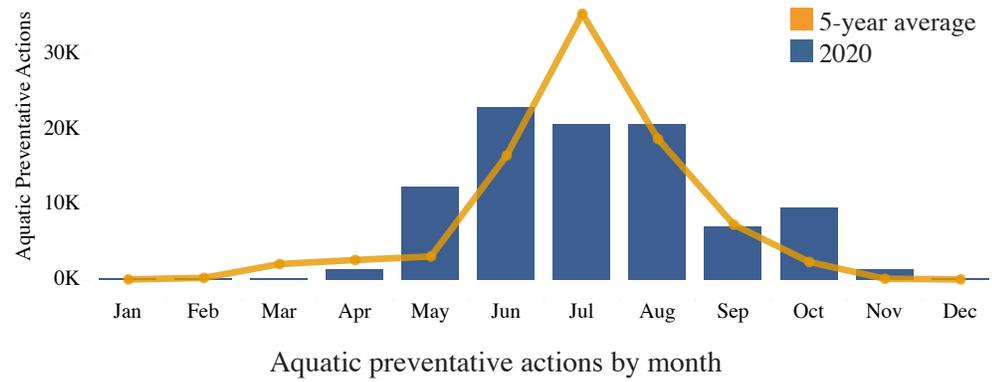
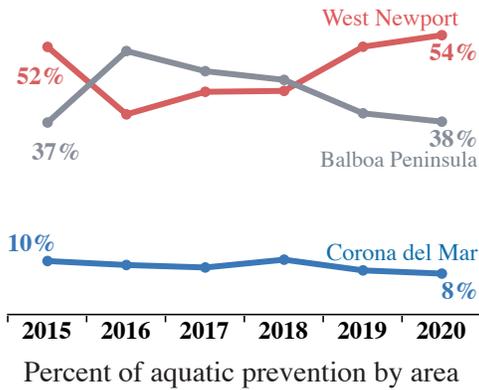
TOTAL CALLS: 189,033

12% Increase from five-year annual average

3.5x May 2020 call volume was 3.5 times the five-year annual average



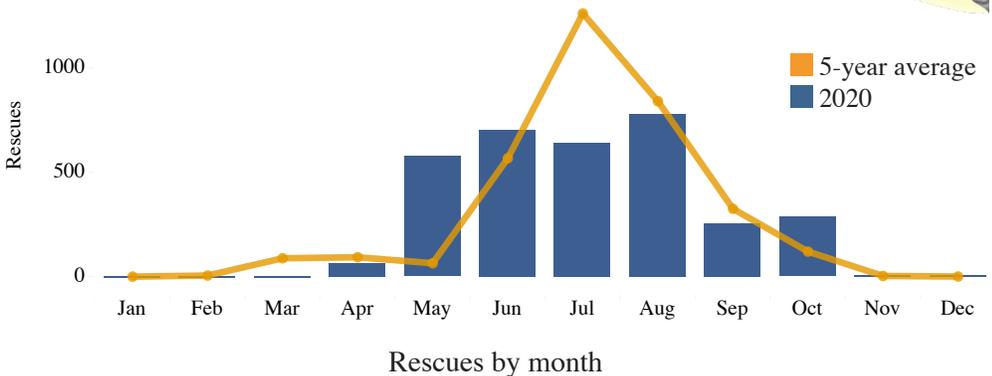
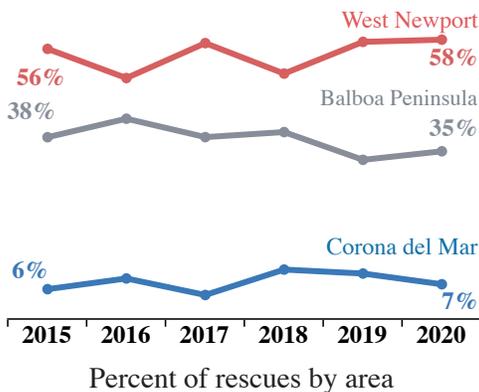
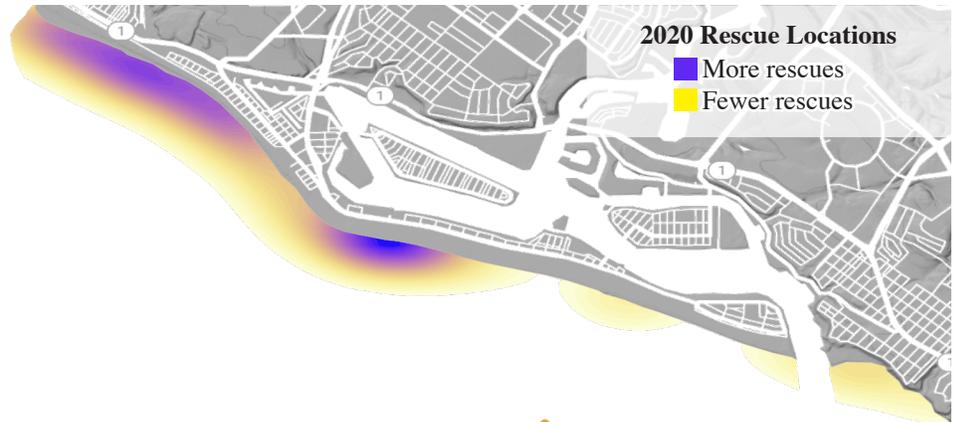
AQUATIC PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS: 96,290



RESCUES: 3,310

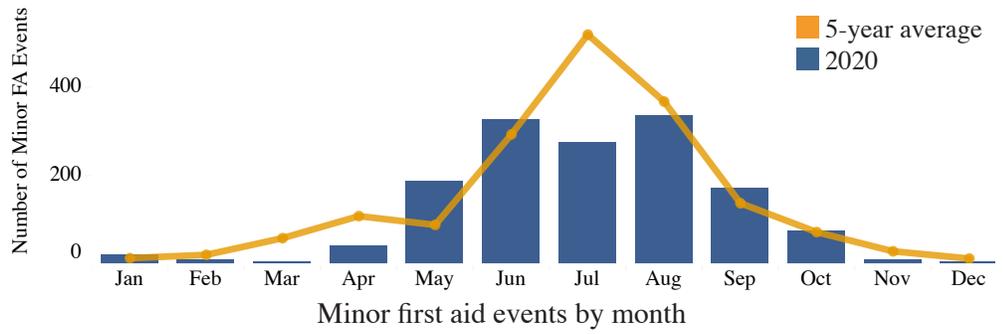
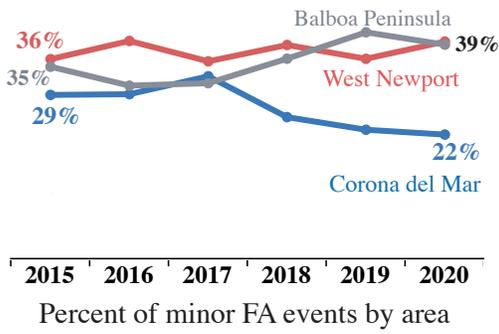
Rescues per Mile
 West Newport: **831**
 Balboa Peninsula: **383**
 Corona del Mar: **800**

2020 activity in each area standardized for size of the beach. West Newport ≈ 2.3 miles, Balboa Peninsula ≈ 3 miles, Corona del Mar ≈ 0.3 miles.

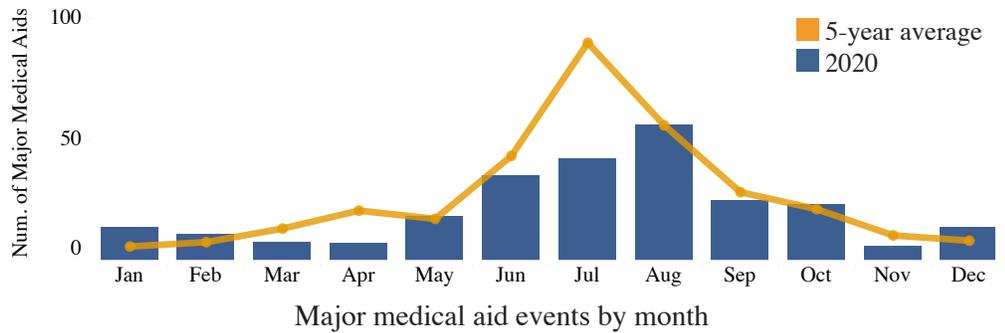
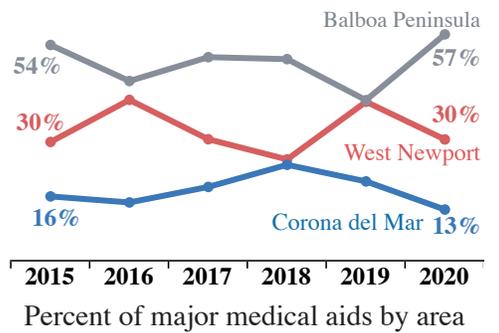


Lifeguard Activity Continued...

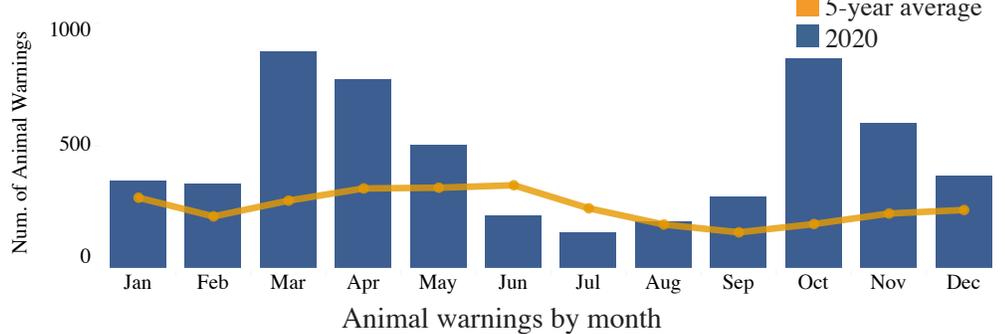
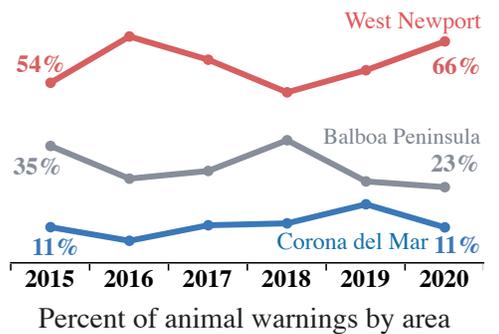
MINOR FIRST AID EVENTS: 1,467



MAJOR MEDICAL AID EVENTS: 259



ANIMAL WARNINGS: 5,523



OTHER CALLS FOR SERVICE:

PUBLIC CONTACTS
45,379
 2020 Total

CODE ENFORCEMENT
10,386
 2020 Total

STINGRAY INCIDENTS
645
 2020 Total

SURFER WARNINGS
12,589
 2020 Total

Public contacts per mile*:
 West Newport: **16,855**
 Balboa Peninsula: **16,215**
 Corona del Mar: **36,703**

Code enforcements per mile*:
 West Newport: **1,837**
 Balboa Peninsula: **1,163**
 Corona del Mar: **5,073**

Stingray incidents per mile*:
 West Newport: **143**
 Balboa Peninsula: **40**
 Corona del Mar: **447**

Surfer warnings per mile*:
 West Newport: **4,429**
 Balboa Peninsula: **688**
 Corona del Mar: **1,127**

*2020 activity in each area standardized for size of the beach. West Newport ≈ 2.3 miles, Balboa Peninsula ≈ 3 miles, Corona del Mar ≈ 0.3 miles.

2020 ACTIVITY & WORK HOURS DATA

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2020 Totals
Lifeguard Event	2020 Lifeguard Activity												
Aquatic Prevention	60	124	166	1,288	12,337	22,896	20,648	20,750	7,032	9,551	1,390	48	96,290
Public Contact	1,314	1,262	1,638	2,350	5,317	8,570	7,342	7,822	4,647	3,384	1,007	726	45,379
Surfer Warning			1	72	1,414	2,816	3,336	3,251	1,075	624			12,589
Code Enforcement	18	57	49	101	4,895	567	3,700	527	297	126	29	20	10,386
Animal Warning	358	346	882	769	501	213	148	191	290	855	592	378	5,523
Rescues		3	3	65	577	699	639	776	251	284	6	7	3,310
Rock Warning	5	5	14	53	499	698	713	501	235	110	23	7	2,863
First Aid Event	22	10	7	42	187	327	274	335	171	75	10	7	1,467
Stingray Incident	13	41	25	67	183	80	57	31	32	63	47	6	645
Public Assist	28	23	28	25	57	84	62	71	73	53	30	10	544
Hole Warning	20	12	20	22	79	105	88	54	31	31	19	12	493
Major Medical Aid	14	11	8	7	18	35	42	56	25	23	6	14	259
Boat Warning	1	8	6	30	95	88	97	69	58	17	3	1	473
Lost Person	1	2			6	23	9	15	12	7	2	1	78
Wheel Chair Assist		4	1			4	8	20	16	8	4	1	66
Dead Animal	3	8	6	7	2	3			1		4		34
Boat Assist					5	2	4	12	5	2			30
Injured Animal	3	5	3	2		1	1	4	2	1	1	2	25
Boat Tow					1	2	3	6	4				16
Boat Rescue				1		5	1	1	1	3		1	13
Boat Accident					1		2	5			1		9
Sand Entrapment		1	1		3					2	1		8
Shark Sighting						2	1	2				1	6
Division	2020 Lifeguard Work Hours												
West Newport	311	346	487	797	3,439	5,874	7,719	7,402	4,021	1,752	362	367	32,877
Balboa Peninsula	370	322	424	642	2,325	4,787	7,518	7,437	3,423	1,463	322	365	29,398
Junior Lifeguards	196	174	807	186	164	4,327	10,122	5,564	183	277	271	217	22,488
Headquarters Division	1,083	1,037	1,119	1,150	1,701	1,412	1,644	1,606	1,504	2,004	1,474	1,199	16,933
Corona del Mar	360	364	392	453	1,307	2,047	2,855	2,910	1,513	879	348	364	13,792
Rescue Boats	342	362	346	372	565	1,151	2,011	2,050	992	518	344	401	9,454
Training Operations	455	846	2,726	1,726	943	1,884	130	15	9	9	32	27	8,802
Monthly Hours Totals	3,117	3,451	6,301	5,326	10,444	21,482	31,999	26,984	11,645	6,902	3,153	2,940	133,744



**Newport Beach Fire Department
Lifeguard Operations Division**

***SAFETY
SERVICE
PROFESSIONALISM***

