



## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Midway Fire Rescue urges parents to keep a close eye on kids at the beach**

GEORGETOWN COUNTY — When people visit the beach, they're usually looking for a day of fun and relaxation. But for families bringing young children with them, a perfect day can quickly become a nightmare if they aren't careful.

It's easy to get distracted on the beach and, if the beach is crowded, a child can go missing very quickly due to the openness and uniformity of the surroundings, said Todd Blomdahl, division chief/fire marshal for Midway Fire Rescue. At low tide, there is even more room for a small child to get lost in the mix of brightly colored bathing suits, umbrellas and towels.

Midway urges parents and guardians to be extremely vigilant while enjoying the beach with young children.

Following are tips to help keep small children safe:

- Never leave a small child at the beach without an adult. Most adults get distracted, but younger teens/siblings are more easily distracted at the beach; thus they need adult supervision.
- If your child does not know how to swim, make sure they wear a personal flotation device at all times. This will not only keep them safe if they enter the water unattended, but it also makes them easier to find if they become missing.
- If your child is old enough, teach them the street number and/or beach access number where you entered the beach. In addition, try to use the same beach access during your entire stay.
- Point out large physical landmarks near your place on the beach, such as large buildings or signs. This will give your child a reference point to get back if they wander. Do not use items low to the ground such as umbrellas or towels as landmarks.

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- If you discover your child missing, do not panic. Stay at your spot on the beach and immediately call (or have someone call) 911 for emergency assistance. Be prepared to provide your exact location, a description of the child, and a call-back number. Look at the wind direction and send out other adults/teens in the downwind direction (children tend to walk with the wind).

Midway Fire Rescue receives many calls for missing children on the beach during the summer months and is dedicated to serving all Georgetown County residents and visitors. But parents and guardians can help avoid the upset of a missing child by following these tips and by being extra attentive to children on the beach.

“Most people don’t realize that on a typical missing child call, we will send a command vehicle, a fire engine, an ambulance, a beach rescue truck and a surf unit,” said Blomdahl. “In addition, Sheriff’s Department units, other support units and volunteers will also join in the effort to find your child. Although this is the initial response, resources are doubled and even tripled as necessary when there is a suspected drowning or if units have to cover a larger area.

“In the end, we want you and your family to have a great time on the beach and never have to see first-hand all the effort that goes into searching for a missing child,” he continued. “Please be attentive, so all your memories of your time at the beach can be good ones.”

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