

Huge waves in California lure bodysurfers, crowds to beaches

May 4 2015, by Gillian Flaccus



A person surfs at the Wedge in Newport Beach, Calif., Monday, May 4, 2015. The highest surf was expected Monday, with some sets reaching more than 12 feet along beaches in Orange and San Diego counties and 10 feet at Malibu and Zuma in Los Angeles County, the National Weather Service said. (Mindy Schauer/The Orange County Register via AP)

Hundreds of spectators lined the beach and gasped, cheered and clapped

on Monday as bodysurfers braved 15-foot waves at The Wedge, a Newport Beach break known for its powerful waves.

The thrill of challenging the walls of churning water created by a major storm thousands of miles away lured bodysurfer Robin Mohr out of bed before sunrise.

He was panting on the sand after a wave sent him tumbling through the foamy chop. A trickle of blood was on his forehead, where he'd been smacked by a surfboard earlier in the day.

"You're just super-alert to where you're positioned, because the worst-case scenario is you land with your head on the sand," said Mohr, 50, a South African who drove from San Diego to Newport Beach.

Big surf has been pounding south-facing sections of the Southern California coast since Sunday, keeping lifeguards busy and attracting daring surfers and bodysurfers with boards, wetsuits and fins in tow.

A high-surf advisory remained in effect through Tuesday.

The highest surf was expected Monday, kicked up by the Southern Hemisphere storm. Six- to 8-foot waves were recorded at Santa Monica, with slightly higher surf in neighboring Venice.

The Behr family from Denver brought their sons, 1-year-old Cole and 3-year-old Max, to the beach for what the father David Behr called a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



Beachgoers watch as surf breaks at The Wedge in Newport Beach, Calif., Monday, May 4, 2015. Big surf kept rolling ashore Monday along south-facing sections of the Southern California coast after bodysurfers challenged the towering waves over the weekend and lifeguards were kept busy pulling people from the water. (AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus)

"We've been to Hawaii a few times and whenever you can catch some big waves, just watching it is incredible," he said, between snapping pictures and pointing out extra-big waves to his younger son.

Newport Beach saw 55,000 visitors over the weekend, but the crowds were smaller on Monday. Even so, more lifeguards were on duty Monday than usual because of the high surf, said Newport Beach Chief Lifeguard Rob Williams.

The rough conditions extended north along the coast to San Luis Obispo County. Avalon, Port San Luis, San Simeon and Cayucos could see

currents capable of dislodging moored vessels and docks, forecasters said.



A person body boards at the Wedge in Newport Beach, Calif., Monday, May 4, 2015. The highest surf was expected Monday, with some sets reaching more than 12 feet along beaches in Orange and San Diego counties and 10 feet at Malibu and Zuma in Los Angeles County, the National Weather Service said. (Mindy Schauer/The Orange County Register via AP)

"Inexperienced swimmers should definitely stay out of the water," Seal Beach police Sgt. Ron LaVelle said.

Lifeguards pulled 17 people out of the water over the weekend off Newport Beach. It was the busiest weekend for lifeguards since March when 134 people were rescued during a weekend of big waves and warm weather.

The conditions caused minor flooding Sunday night along beachfront homes in low-lying Seal Beach. Water washed up over the boardwalk, but there was no property damage.



Two people surf at the Wedge in Newport Beach, Calif., Monday, May 4, 2015. The highest surf was expected Monday, with some sets reaching more than 12 feet along beaches in Orange and San Diego counties and 10 feet at Malibu and Zuma in Los Angeles County, the National Weather Service said. (Mindy Schauer/The Orange County Register via AP)



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