

# Okaloosa County News Release

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## **Lifeguards Patrolling Okaloosa County Beaches March 19 New Lightning Prediction Alert System in Operation**

Okaloosa Beach Safety will begin active lifeguard operations on Saturday, March 19, and will continue daily from **9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.** through Sunday, October 30, 2011. Beach flag conditions will be announced daily at 9:00 a.m. and can be viewed at <http://okaloosabeachsafety.org> and <http://coolgate.mote.org/beachconditions/>.

A **new lightning safety feature** has been added to the system for 2011. The [ThorGuard Lightning Prediction System](#) effectively reads the activity within the electrostatic field of an approaching weather system and will predict the probability of a lightning strike with a high degree of accuracy on Okaloosa Island. Beachgoers should be aware of the following:

- When the system determines a hazardous condition, the **air-horns and strobe lights** provide unmistakable audible and visual alerts.
- When the horns and strobes are activated, **follow the directions of the lifeguards** on the beach and seek shelter in a protected area.
- When the weather passes and the lightning threat dissipates, the horns will sound an “all clear” and the strobes will stop flashing.
- **Continue to follow the directions of lifeguards even after the “all clear” has sounded.**

The sensor continuously monitors the atmosphere's electrostatic energy as far away as 15 miles and evaluates the potential for lightning within an area of approximately 2 miles in radius.

Please be observant of the warning flags placed along public beaches. Green flags indicate a low hazard with calm swimming conditions, yellow flags- medium hazard, red flags- high hazard, and purple flags indicate marine pests are present. If a double red flag is flying, the **water is closed for swimming**. Be aware of the hazards, swim in front of a lifeguard, make wise choices and to be safe this summer. Beach Safety lifeguards conduct training throughout the year to maintain their qualifications and preparedness for the summer season. For more information, contact Beach Safety, 850-609-5405.

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