

Interactive comment on “Public Perceptions of a Rip Current Hazard Education Program: ‘Break the Grip of the Rip!’” by Chris Houser et al.

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This paper presents results from an online survey of beach visitors in the USA which was directed at determining their perceptions of the ‘break the grip of the rip’ program specifically and, more generally, their knowledge of rip hazards and how to deal with them. The paper provides a useful introduction to the hazards posed by rip currents and the literature on this. It gives details of the break the grip program and also of related safety programs in place in the US to reduce drowning deaths related to rip currents. The methodology is clearly presented and illustrated with photographs and diagrams from the campaign and the questionnaire. The results are organised in sections around various themes which relate to the swimming ability and experience of the visitors with rip currents. These provide a useful means of evaluating the overall knowledge of rip currents and the hazards associated with them and also provide a

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means of assessing future directions in terms of rip safety. There is, however, no section that focusses on familiarity with the “break the grip’ program itself and it might be useful to tackle this first and then go on to the detailed analysis. The results section is a little lengthy and could be shortened a bit by confining the quotes to one or two per section since they are provided purely for illustration. The discussion is quite lengthy, but serves a useful purpose in drawing out the relevant messages from the survey itself and especially the contrast between frequent visitors, who were knowledgeable of the hazard, and infrequent visitors who were not knowledgeable and therefore likely to be most at risk. However, the key take-home messages in the discussion are not always apparent and it might be better to make them clearer in the conclusions by presenting them (the conclusions) as a set of concise bullet points that bring out the key results and recommendations rather than as a lengthy paragraph. The authors note in the introduction that the US has 4 coastlines (presumably the Arctic coast is omitted because of limited swimming opportunities) and that they differed considerably in terms of wave climate and beach systems. They also differ in the role of winds in generating or exacerbating the hazard. Thus, on the Great Lakes rip currents always occur in the presence of moderate to strong winds while on the west coast rip currents are often associated with large swell events and wind may be light. In the Great Lakes most rip current deaths appear to be associated with natural headlands, or with the presence of large groynes or harbour jetties but in Florida or Texas this is probably not the case. It might be useful therefore to comment on whether there were differences in responses based on which coast people used and to assess whether the education program should be tailored to individual coasts. Robin Davidson-Arnott University of Guelph

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