



USAG-Okinawa Safety



➤ Water Safety

➤ Typhoon Safety

➤ Local Hazards Awareness

SAFETY MESSAGE

USAG Okinawa Safety Office

Okinawa Sea Conditions Water Safety

Okinawa Sea Conditions and water safety continues to be the greatest hazard for SOFA personnel on the island. The waters around the island both at the coast and inland provide a source of recreational enjoyment for all people who live and visit Okinawa. Please encourage Soldiers, civilians, and their family members to exercise the highest level of caution while enjoying activities in and around the water. Water conditions off the shoreline can turn treacherous quickly and the uninformed or overconfident person can find themselves in extreme danger. Know the Sea Conditions, recognize local water hazards, and always use caution when entering the water.

SAFETY TIPS:

- Obey local hazard warning signs, if posted, and never swim alone.
- Seek the latest forecasts and Sea Condition information available on AFN.usd@hqs.af.mil or www.afnweather.com.
- Conduct a visual assessment of the sea and be aware of the local ocean hazards at your location.
- Use appropriately sized safety equipment designed for your sport/activity, ensure that it is serviceable and familiarize yourself with all equipment before use.
- Be cautious at all times, especially when swimming at unguarded beaches.
- Know your limitations, and do not surpass them.
- Apply the same Risk Management process taught on-the-job to all your off-duty activities.
- Get appropriate training for water activities.
- Check with local Dive Masters and lifeguards before entering the water.
- Respect the sea and keep a respectful distance from the water during elevated sea conditions and/or fog.

Remember, it's up to you to take responsibility for your own water safety: Think Safety, Act Responsibly.

SAFETY MESSAGE



Water Hazards

HAZARDOUS MARINE LIFE FOUND IN OKINAWA

Hazardous Marine Life in the waters of Okinawa is the same as you will find in sub-tropical areas of the Pacific. Prior to entering the water personnel should familiarize themselves with the common marine inhabitants.

1. **PORTULACA**
Portulaca is a small, green, fleshy-leaved plant that grows in shallow water. It is highly toxic and can cause severe allergic reactions and respiratory distress. Avoid contact with the plant and do not ingest it.

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Water Safety Tips

- Obey local hazard warning signs, if posted, and never swim alone.
- Get the latest forecasts and Sea Conditions information available on AFN and <http://shogunweather.com/> .
- Be aware of the local ocean hazards.
- Use appropriate safety equipment designed for your sport/activity.
- Be cautious at all times, especially when swimming at unguarded beaches.
- Know your limitations, and do not surpass them.
- Apply Risk Management process to all your off-duty activities.
- Get appropriate training for water activities.
- Check with local Dive Masters and lifeguards before entering the water.
- Respect the sea and keep a respectful distance from the water during elevated sea conditions and/or TCCOR.

U. S. MILITARY SEA CONDITION INFORMATION FOR OKINAWA

Effective
01 May 2013

Condition Definitions

Sea Condition All Clear (SC-AC): Conditions which are ideal for water related activities.

Sea Condition Caution (SC-C): Hazardous conditions may exist. Exercise caution when entering the water.

Sea Condition Danger (SC-D): Life threatening conditions exist.

Personnel may enter the water during Sea Condition Danger under the following conditions:

1. Recreational daytime swimming in designated swim areas on and off military installations when staffed by lifeguards and open for public use.
2. Professionally monitored athletic competitions staffed with trained rescue personnel (e.g. Dragon Boat Races, triathlons, open ocean swims).
3. Aboard Okuma when the Okuma Commander/Deputy Commander determines allowable water activities.
4. Aboard Torii Station when the Garrison Commander determines allowable water activities.
5. Aboard White Beach when the Commander, Fleet Activities Okinawa determines allowable water activities.

Criteria

SC-AC (All Clear): Wind speeds have been reported at less than 18 MPH (16 Knots). Locally assessed conditions are suitable for novice water enthusiasts intending to participate in the location's primary water activities.

SC-C (Caution): Wind speeds of 18 MPH (16 Knots) or greater, including gusts, have been observed for at least 3 hours. Locally assessed conditions warrant that individuals participating in water activities have extensive experience both in the planned activity and at the location.

SC-D (Danger): Wind speeds of 35 MPH (30 Knots) or greater, including gusts, have been observed and are to persist for at least 3 hours or during Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness (TCCOR) 2. Locally assessed conditions are dangerous and warrant restricting access to the water and removal of individuals from the water. Note - Military facilities will cease rental of water recreation equipment in SC-D. Swimming activities may continue at the discretion of the Recreation Director/Commander.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Conditions and criteria are based on a generalized evaluation and may not be consistent with the weather and sea state throughout the entire coastline of Okinawa. Therefore, personnel must be equipped to make an individual assessment of the hazards for their intended activity.

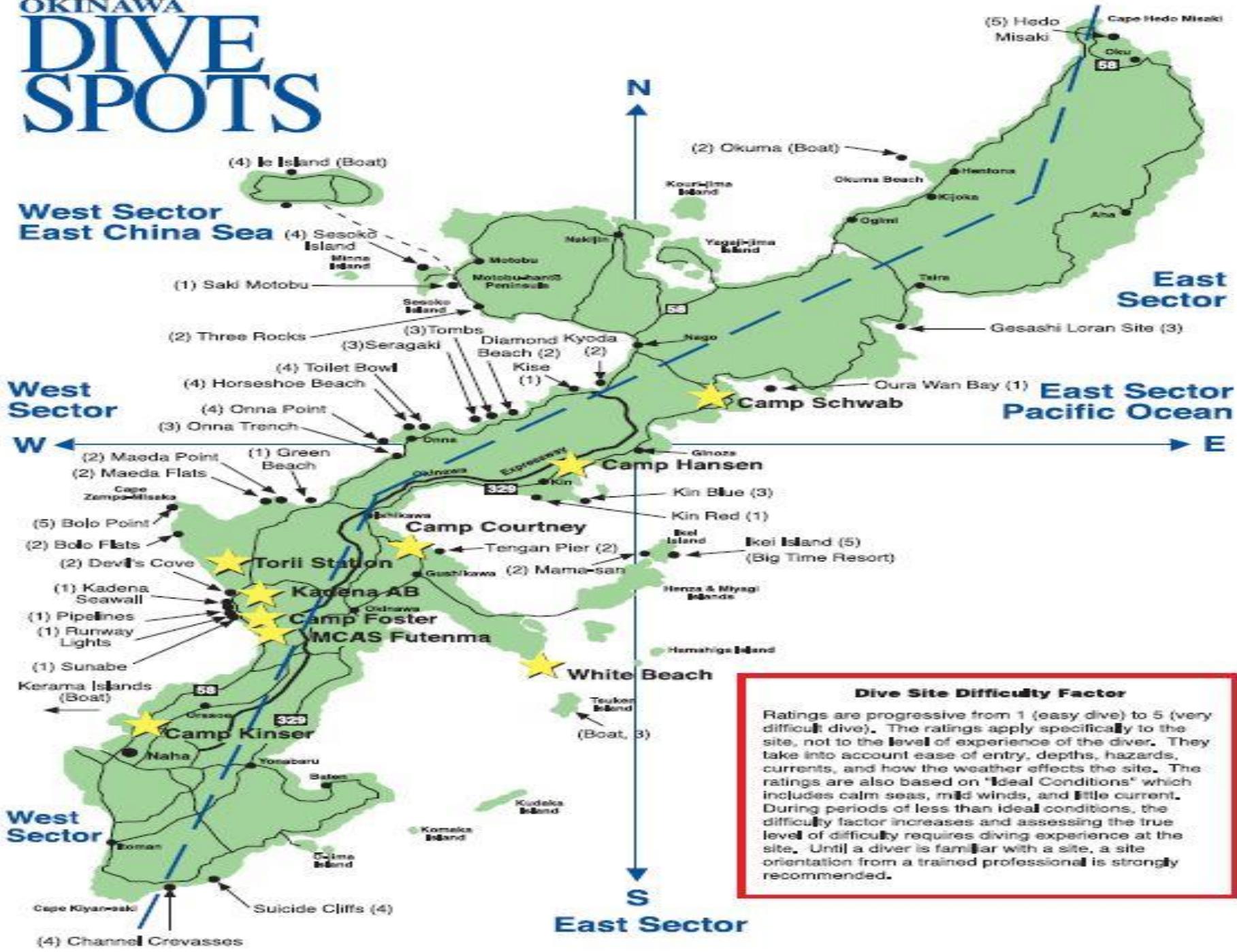


Sector Location

West (W) - East China Sea shoreline, Hedo Point (Northern tip) west down to Cape Kiyau (Southern tip)

East (E) - Pacific Ocean shoreline, Hedo Point (Northern tip) east down to Cape Kiyau (Southern tip)

OKINAWA DIVE SPOTS



Dive Site Difficulty Factor

Ratings are progressive from 1 (easy dive) to 5 (very difficult dive). The ratings apply specifically to the site, not to the level of experience of the diver. They take into account ease of entry, depths, hazards, currents, and how the weather effects the site. The ratings are also based on "Ideal Conditions" which includes calm seas, mild winds, and little current. During periods of less than ideal conditions, the difficulty factor increases and assessing the true level of difficulty requires diving experience at the site. Until a diver is familiar with a site, a site orientation from a trained professional is strongly recommended.

HAZARDOUS MARINE LIFE FOUND IN OKINAWA

Hazardous Marine Life in the waters of Okinawa is the same as you will find in sub-tropical areas of the Pacific. Prior to entering the water personnel should familiarize themselves with the common marine inhabitants.



1. STONE FISH

This species camouflage is incredibly effective and only observers with a trained eye are likely to see them. However, there are several things you can do to reduce the likelihood of standing on, sitting on, or accidentally touching one of these highly poisonous fish. Always wear thick-soled shoes, dive boots or reef-walking shoes while treading on the bottom. Whenever possible, swim rather than walk to lessen the chance of being stung by a stonefish. When walking, shuffle your feet in front of the other rather than big strides in which each foot is raised up and placed down onto the sea bed. The shuffle motion will increase the likelihood that you scare a stonefish away from your tracks rather than stepping on its spines. If a person is injured by a stonefish seek medical attention without delay.

2. LION FISH

Lionfish are beautiful but, deadly. Their feather-like fins are brightly-colored and tipped with strong venom. Lionfish are secretive, hiding under ledges and in caves during the day. They are nocturnal predators, actively feeding at night. Lionfish feed on crabs, shrimps and small fish. A sting from a Lionfish is extremely painful, and victims must seek medical attention immediately. Soaking the limb in very hot water is recommended for first aid. Lionfish are popular aquarium pets. Caution should be used if you plan on keeping one as a pet. If a person is suspected to have been injured by a Lionfish seek medical attention without delay.

3. CONE SNAILS

The cone snail is equipped with a harpoon like tooth which injects its prey with a highly potent concoction of toxins. Some species of cone snails can cause serious injuries and even death to humans. If you collect seashells do so with great care. If a person is suspected to have been injured by a cone snail seek medical attention without delay.

4. SEA SNAKES

Sea snakes inhabit the tropical waters of the Indo-Pacific and are highly venomous. Sea snakes have flattened tails for swimming and have valves over their nostrils that are closed underwater. Sea snakes may be inquisitive but are not considered aggressive unless threatened such as when caught in fishing net or handled roughly. If a snake should approach don't panic, simply swim away. Very few sea snake bites occur around the world and those that do, usually happen on trawlers, when the snakes are sometimes hauled in with the catch. Someone suspected of being bitten should be taken to the hospital without delay.

5. SEA URCHINS

There are several different types of urchins living in Okinawa. Generally you don't have to worry too much if you are standing on sand; these creatures like the reef and rocks. Stepping on or even touching a urchin can not only drive a spine into flesh, but the spines are so brittle that they often break off in the wound and become infected easily. Use reef-walker type shoes or dive boots while walking in shallow water or along the shoreline. Do not stand or walk on coral. If you should step on a sea urchin the safest bet is to seek medical attention if spines break off under the skin.

6. CROWN OF THORN STARFISH

The only starfish on Okinawa to look out for would be the crown-of-thorns starfish. Their bodies are covered with sharp, pointed spines that have venom. Stepping on or bumping against these creatures will result in the spines penetrating the skin and venom injection. The pain can be intense and severe reaction may result in nausea and vomiting or shock. You may need to seek medical treatment.

7. BLUE RINGED OCTOPUS

The blue ringed octopus is small, and rarely is larger than a few inches from the tip of one tentacle across to the tip of the opposite tentacle. It is normally light colored with dark brown bands over each of its eight arms and body, with blue circles superimposed on the dark brown bands. When the octopus is threatened the rings turn a brilliant electric-blue color, and it is this change that gives the animal its name. The blue ringed octopus is very poisonous and should never be handled. The octopus has a parrot-like beak that contains a poison that could cause respiratory paralysis. Parents should keep a very watchful eye on the things children pick up while at the ocean. Someone suspected of being bitten should be taken to the hospital without delay.

8. BOX JELLYFISH

The Box Jellyfish (locally known as the Habu Kurage) produces a very painful sting with potential to be life threatening. May through September is a time when the waters surrounding Okinawa become very warm, and along with this warmth brings increase sightings of jellyfish. When heading to the ocean during periods when jellyfish may be abundant, use these common sense preventive measures:

- If jellyfish are washed-up onto shore don't enter the water.
- Don't touch a jellyfish even though it is dead. The tentacles can still sting.

9. FIRE CORAL

All cuts from contact with coral should receive medical attention. The Fire Coral can actually sting a diver since coral is a coelenterate like jellyfish. Some of the soft coral of this species have been found to contain the deadliest poison known to man. This poison is found within the body of the organism and not in the stinging nematocysts. The slime of this coral may cause a serious skin reaction (dermatitis) or even be fatal if exposed to an open wound. No antidote is known. If injured from contact with coral, clean wound with liberal amounts of fresh water and seek medical attention.

10. MORAY EEL

Eels are commonly found in holes and crevices or under rocks and coral. It is snake-like in both appearance and movement and has tough, leathery skin. It can grow to a length of 15 feet and has prominent teeth. Bites frequently result from reaching into a crevice or hole occupied by the eel. It is a vicious biter and may be difficult to dislodge after a bite is initiated. Bites from moray eels may vary from multiple small puncture wounds to the tearing, jagged type with profuse bleeding if there has been a struggle. Extreme care should be used when reaching into holes or crevices. Avoid provoking or attempting to dislodge an eel from its hole.

11. BARRACUDA

Approximately 10 species of barracuda inhabit the waters of Okinawa. The barracuda is a long, thin fish with prominent jaws and teeth, silver to blue in color, with a large head and a V-shaped tail. It may grow up to 10 feet long and is a fast swimmer, capable of striking rapidly and fiercely. They have been known to attack surface swimmers and limbs dangling in the water. Life threatening attacks by barracuda are rare. Barracuda are attracted by any bright object. Avoid wearing shiny equipment or jewelry (wedding rings or earrings).

12. SHARKS

Attacks on humans are infrequent; and rarely do they occur in Okinawan waters. Attacks are usually provoked when the animal feels threatened. Injuries may result not only from bites, but also by coming in contact with the species skin. Shark skin is covered with very sharp dentine appendages, called denticles, which are reinforced with tooth-like centers. Contact with shark skin can lead to wide abrasions and heavy bleeding. Pre-attack behavior by most sharks is somewhat predictable. A shark preparing to attack swims with an exaggerated motion, its pectoral fins pointing down in contrast to the usual flared out position, and it swims in circles of decreasing radius around the prey.

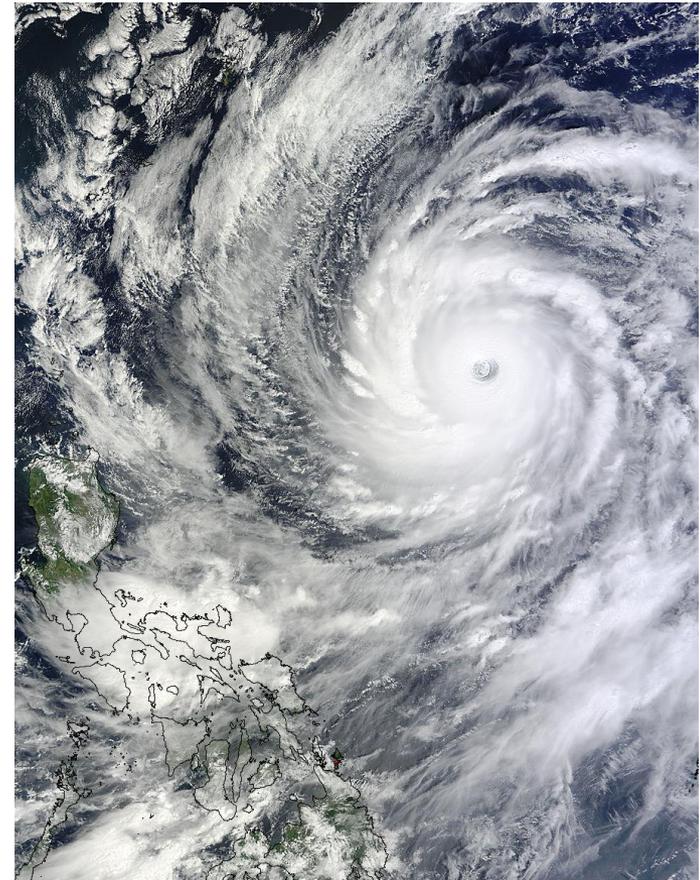


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Typhoon Safety

- **TCCOR 4**: Lowest stage. Indicates that a possible threat of destructive winds will occur in 72 hours.
 - Evaluate your preparation.
- **TCCOR 3**: Destructive Winds are possible within 48 hours.
 - Prepare yourself and quarters.
- **TCCOR 2**: Destructive winds are anticipated in 24 hours.
 - Essential personnel only.
- **TCCOR 1**: Destructive winds are anticipated within 12 hours.
 - Do not go outside.
- **All Clear**





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Local Hazards

- Safe Driving
- Don't Drink and Drive (.03 everywhere)
- Plan



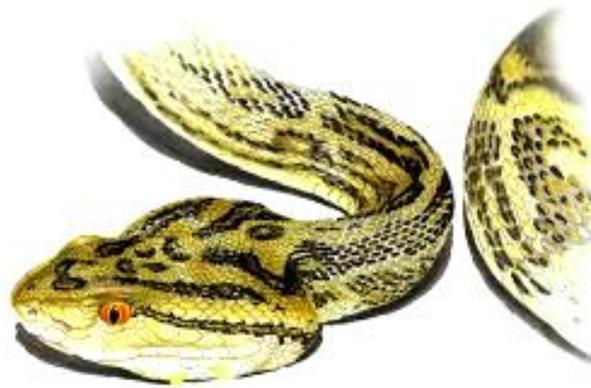


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Local Hazards

- Habu: Several types, all venomous



- **AVOID** going into farming areas, sugar cane fields, and bushes especially at night time. The Habu snake prefers damp, secluded places such as sugar cane fields, bushy tombs, road sides, between stone walls, and caves.
- **IF BITTEN:** On Army facilities call **644-4715** or **098-956-1206** if calling from a cell phone or get help to evacuate yourself/friend to U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa while minimizing physical activity.



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Emergency Contacts

Base 911 (DSN): 911
(Camp Foster Dispatch)

ON-base Non-emergency: 644-4715 (Torii Station PMO)

Off-base (cell): 098-934-5911
or 098-911-1911

