

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of County Commissioners

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FORT
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Destin-Fort Walton Beach Implements New Beach Safety Measures

Okaloosa County, Fla. – Okaloosa County launches new beach safety measures, championed and funded by Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism, in partnership with Okaloosa County Beach Safety and Destin Fire Control District. Administered by Okaloosa County Public Safety, the initiatives include a synchronized beach warning flag selection across all guarded beaches in Destin-Fort Walton Beach, a text alert system and GPS-mapped signage to help first responders reach emergencies most efficiently.

“The safety of our residents and guests is paramount. The new measures will increase awareness to the beach flag warning system and will make emergency response even more efficient,” said Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners Chairman, Mel Ponder.

A universal Beach Flag Warning Program was adopted by communities across the state of Florida in 2005. Destin-Fort Walton Beach is no exception to this universal system. Differences in flag colors, sizes and symbols can confuse beachgoers so beach safety teams across the state post a beach warning flag, based on trained observations. In the past, observations may have prompted a different warning flag to be posted at beaches within Destin city limits than the flag selection for unincorporated Okaloosa County. To further improve the effectiveness of Beach Safety; Okaloosa County, City of Destin and Henderson Beach State Park will now post a synchronized beach warning flag based on conditions observed.

Because of the consistent flag selection across all of Destin-Fort Walton Beach, a daily text messaging system has been made possible. Locals and visitors are encouraged to text “BEACH” to **44144** for a consolidated, daily beach warning flag update for Okaloosa Island, Henderson Beach State Park and City of Destin public beaches guarded by Destin Fire Control District.

In addition to the beach flag messaging system, individually numbered R-Signs were installed near the dunes as part of the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Wayfinder Network. The signs act as reference points for beach-goers who call 911, to notify first responders of their location during an emergency. The first signs were installed every 500 feet, along a three-mile stretch of Okaloosa Island beaches, with plans to expand throughout Okaloosa County. The GPS coordinates of each sign are registered with first responders so they can effectively locate those calling 911.

A Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism Safety rack-card will be distributed throughout Okaloosa County to educate and inform. The rack-card provides information on the beach flag texting system, beach rules and rip current safety. Businesses interested in receiving the rack-card to distribute may email: Marketing@DestinFWB.com or click [HERE](#) to download now.

“These safety measures are invaluable and a key to keeping those visiting our beaches safe. It has been five years in the making and we hope that these efforts will assist our local dispatch in quickly responding to emergency situations and keep our residents and guests safe,” said Jennifer Adams, Director, Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism.

For more information on Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida, please visit www.destinfwb.com.

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