



## Department of Communications

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **GARY BEACHES SET TO OPEN MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND ... CITY OFFICIALS OFFER *BEACH SAFETY TIPS; NEW PARKING RATES***

**Gary, Indiana**-Gary's beautiful beaches will officially open to beachgoers the Memorial Day weekend. City officials remind residents that water conditions on Lake Michigan can be dangerous and are advised to take necessary precautions when entering the water.

While weather forecasts predict warmer temperatures, the water temperature in Lake Michigan has not yet risen above 50 degrees. It is advised that swimmers refrain from getting in the water until weather temperatures are warmer or consistently warm. Additionally as thunderstorms are predicted, swimmers should beware of rip currents, waves and undertows. E-coli counts are also often high after heavy rains. The city monitors the weather and water conditions through the National Weather Center.

Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson stated, "During the winter months, we convened a committee of park workers and volunteers who worked to improve the city's beach emergency action plan. One change in the policy is that children 12 & under must be accompanied by an adult-age 18 and over and must always be within arm's reach of an adult. The plan provides our lifeguards with a step by step guide when faced with emergencies." Last year the city experienced a number of beach related emergencies; many involving children. The mayor commended the Park Safety Staff for the numerous saves last year.

Those visiting Marquette Park and Lake Street beaches are reminded of the Parks Department "Carry-In, Carry-Out" policy implemented last year. The policy that enforces the city's litter ordinance, simply requires visitors to take out of the park what is taken in. Last year the department removed trash receptacles from the shoreline and relocated them at entrance, exit points and other designated locations at Marquette Park and Lake Street to accommodate the new policy. Visitors will receive trash bags at the parking booth. "The policy worked well last year, stated, Parks Superintendent, Nathaniel George.

“We saw a cleaner shoreline and less debris in the park and we actually received positive feedback from visitors to the park.”

Visitors to the beach should also be aware that parking rates have been adjusted effective this summer. The following rates will apply at Marquette and Lake Street beaches.

- Lake Street Trailer Rates: \$10 Gary Residents, \$12 Lake County Residents, \$15 Non-Lake County Residents (maximum 2 jet skis, \$3 / jet ski after 2)
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- Season Parking Passes: \$60 Gary Residents, \$65 Lake County Residents, \$75 Non-Lake County Residents
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- Pay station Parking: \$7 / day (\$1 convenience fee for mobile pay app payments)

For more information, please contact the Gary Parks Department at 219-886-7099.

## Beach Safety Tips

The City of Gary welcomes all, to visit and enjoy the city's beaches along the beautiful Lake Michigan shore. City officials offer the following beach safety tips.

- Residents and visitors are advised to check the weather when planning to go to the beach. The water temperature is always far cooler than the air temperature.
- Beware of rip currents, waves and undertows particularly after heavy rain and storms. It is recommended to stay out of the water for at least three days.
- Check for swimming advisories. Watch for and obey warning flags and refrain from entering the water when red flags are present. If a situation arises, swim parallel to the beach. You can also hold your hand up and try to remain calm while calling for help.
- Know the flag colors. Green flags indicate safe water for swimming, yellow flags indicate water is safe, but take precautions, Red flags indicate unsafe water for swimming. Flags will be posted on top of Lifeguard Towers. Signage will also be posted. Lifeguard Towers are color-coded: Red, Blue, Orange, Green and Yellow.
- Remain sober if planning to go to the beach and be reminded that alcohol strictly prohibited at the beach. Glass containers are also prohibited at the city's beaches and parks.
- Lifeguards are on duty during regular hours of operation. Know how to swim and select a swimming spot close to a lifeguard. You may even ask a lifeguard for advice before entering the water.
- It is advised to always swim in pairs and watch out for other swimmers.
- Never allow children to swim unsupervised. The city experienced a number of saves last year involving children that were left unattended.
- Stay properly hydrated during extreme heat. Drink plenty of water and remember children can dehydrate far faster than adults.
- Sun screen is recommended even in moderate temperatures.
- Remember beachgoers are not allowed on Lifeguard towers.
- All pets must be leashed on the beach.
- All city beaches close at dusk including parking areas. Vehicles are subject to be towed if left in parking areas.
- Beachgoers should additionally be mindful that the sandbar can be shallow and deep without warning.