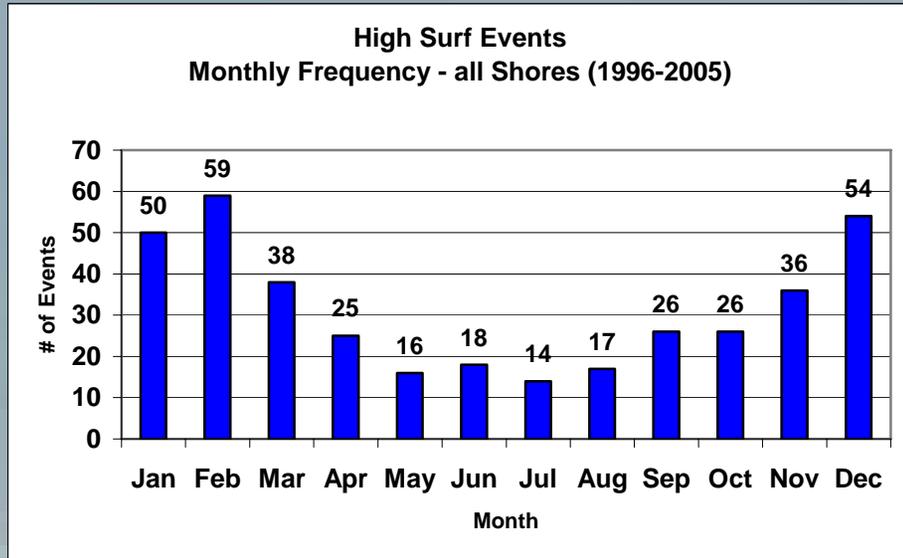
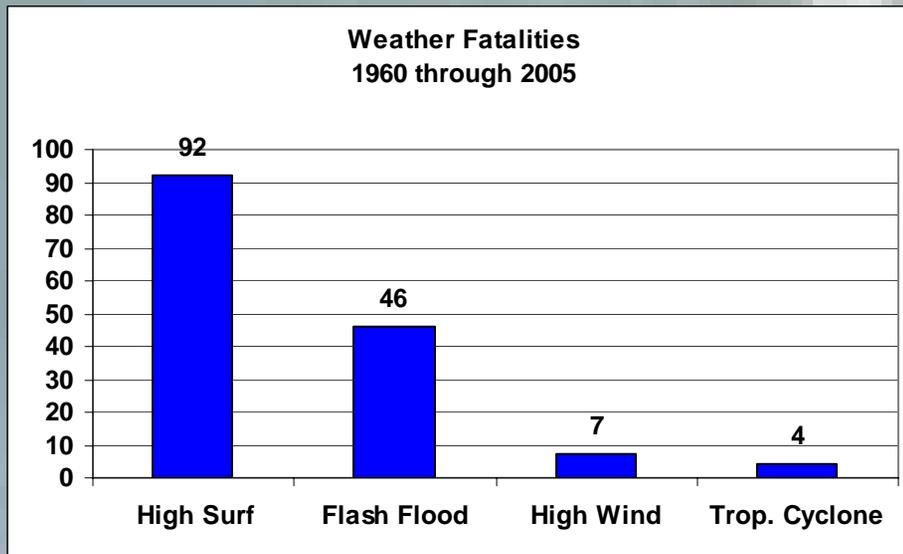


# High Surf in Hawaii

## Statistics and Information

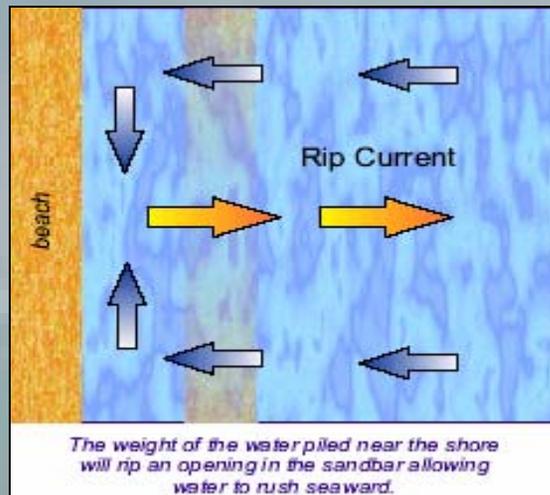


High surf in Hawaii can occur during any month of the year and on any side of the islands. Nearly 50 high surf events can be expected in an average year. However, these events are most frequent during the winter. The graph at left shows the months of December through February contains the largest high surf event frequency. Typically these are the months where the high surf affects the north and west shores. During the summer, southern facing shores tend to be more at risk for high surf events.



High surf is the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the State of Hawaii. On average each year 2 people die and scores more are injured or need rescuing due to high surf. These events are considered to be *indirect* weather impacts since the strong storm systems that produce the large waves are often thousands of miles away from the island chain.

Although the large waves alone can be dangerous to boaters and anyone on the water, high surf impacting the islands also lead to other threats, such as:



1. **Rip Currents.** These are narrow but very strong currents of water flowing from shore out several hundred yards offshore. Even the strongest most experienced swimmer can not swim against a rip current, in which the water may be moving as fast as 5 mph. Although the strongest rip currents tend to occur with higher surf, they exist even with the smallest surf! If caught in a rip current, swim parallel to until you break free, then swim diagonally toward the shore
2. **Coastal Damage.** Prolonged high surf results in a rise in the water level along the affected coast. This rise in water, which can be upwards of 2 to 3 feet with just 20 foot surf, will cause beach erosion and damage to structures or roadways that are built in areas that are very near sea level close to the coast.

For more information on high surf safety, please contact the Honolulu Forecast Office at (808) 973-5270.

