

Beach Briefs - April 22, 2015

Sea Turtle Nesting Restrictions Begin May 1

Each year beginning May 1 threatened and endangered sea turtles nest on Florida beaches as they have done for millions of years. Two months later, tiny hatchlings emerge from their sandy nests and scamper for the water using the seaward horizon as their guiding light. Artificial light visible from the beach confuses them and lures these tiny creatures inland away from the water. Thousands of hatchlings die because lights along the beach are not turned off or shielded properly.



Between May 1 and October 31, Captiva beaches are regularly monitored for sea turtle nesting and hatching success and for individual property owner compliance with lighting restrictions. No light source should be directly visible from the beach. Unshielded interior lighting, even from a single beachfront condominium, is enough to disrupt the normal sea-finding behavior of sea turtle hatchlings. Monitors also look for beach furniture and other impediments left on the beach overnight. Homeowners must correct the violations and citations may be issued.

Examples of 2014 lighting violations and their remedies include:

- ***unshielded white lights*** - abated by changing bulbs to amber LED, shielding the light fixture, and turning off the lights during the nesting season;
- ***bright white light reflecting off exterior wall*** - abated by changing bulbs to amber LED and adjusting the fixtures to eliminate light reflected toward the beach;
- ***bright white lights on corner of roof shining on the beach*** - abated by changing bulbs to amber LED, shielding the fixture, and directing the light away from the beach;
- ***white uplights illuminating palm trees and landscaping on seaward side of house***- abated by turning off lights during turtle nesting season;
- ***white exterior and interior lights shining seaward*** - abated by changing bulbs to amber LED, shielding fixtures, and closing the blinds;
- ***bright white ground lights illuminating sign at the entrance drive*** - abated by changing bulbs to amber LED and reducing the wattage;
- ***bright white stair, hall, and porch lights*** - abated by changing bulbs to amber LED and shielding the fixtures.

If there is any doubt whether a light is an issue, simply turn it off and keep it off between May 1 and October 31. For more information about lighting restrictions during nesting season and approved lighting fixtures, [click here](#).

Please Help Sea Turtles Get Safely to the Water

From May 1 through October 31

- Shield sources of light visible from the beach. Lighting should not be directly visible.
- Use 25-watt yellow bug lights or amber LED lights.
- Retrofit with turtle-friendly fixtures and bulbs. Refocus them away from the beach.
- Close blinds/curtains after dark to eliminate light spilling out to the beach.
- Remove all beach furniture and equipment each night from the beach.

Sea Turtle Nesting Regulations and Guidelines

- Sea turtle nesting habitat must not be directly or indirectly illuminated by artificial lighting originating from existing development between May and October. Most beachfront lighting issues can be addressed by turning off all unnecessary lights, repositioning or modifying light fixtures, or closing blinds and drapes.
- Driving on the beach in a motorized vehicle is prohibited.
- Fires on the beach are prohibited.
- Stay clear of sea turtles and any marked nesting areas. It is a federal offense to disturb or

- interfere with a nest. It is illegal to disturb a nesting turtle with lights or noise.
- It is against the law to have in your possession eggs or any part of a turtle or to retain any threatened or endangered sea turtle hatchlings.



Marked Sea Turtle Nesting Site

- If you encounter a sea turtle, keep a respectful distance, at least 150 feet, and watch quietly.
- You must remove furniture and other items from the beach at night and not put them back on the beach until daylight.
- Keep the beach and water free of litter. Sea turtle deaths have been caused by the ingestion of trash that they mistake for food.
- Level all sand castles and fill any holes. They pose a hazard at night both for females coming ashore and hatchlings trying to reach the water.
- Honor the leash law. In areas where dogs are allowed, they must be on a leash and not allowed to disturb nesting turtles or hatchlings.
- If you find lost hatchlings, call the SCCF at 472-2329. A licensed volunteer will pick up the turtles. While waiting, place them in a dry container with a little moist sand in the bottom and hold them in a shaded area.
- If you see a stranded turtle, check to see if there are orange marks painted on its shell. If so, this stranding has already been reported to the SCCF sea turtle program. If this is a new stranding, call Sea Turtle Coordinator Kelly Sloan at 239-472-2329.

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The Captiva Erosion Prevention District is comprised of 5 elected, unpaid Commissioners dedicated to preserving and maintaining Captiva's beaches and shorelines. For more information on CEPD, click on mycepd.com or join our email list by clicking on mycepd@gmail.com

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