

Off-Duty Lifeguard Saves 3 Teens From Rip Current

Teens Jump From Imperial Beach Pier

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IMPERIAL BEACH, Calif. -- An off-duty lifeguard rescued three teenagers who jumped into a rip current during heavy surf off Imperial Beach.

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"It was a lifeguard's nightmare," Wilson said.

The teens, 13 to 15, unknowingly had jumped into a strong rip current when they entered the water off the Imperial Beach pier.

Arthur Peppers saw the teens climb over the the railing of the pier.

"I knew exactly what was going to happen. The water was going to pull them into the pilings. That's why I told them not to jump," Peppers said.

When Wilson got to the pier, he saw two of the teens under the pilings. He jumped in and swam to a boy clinging to a piling. He helped the boy make it to shore, then went back for a girl.

"She was holding on to an extension cord. She was getting what we call 'ragdolled' -- getting thrown back and forth as the waves would come in and out," he said.

After helping her get to shore, he dove in a third time to rescue

another girl who was still in the water. Wilson said that she was showing signs of hypothermia.

"She kept asking, 'Am I going to live? Am I gonna live?' I said, yeah. I told her to stand up. When she did -- she was amazed," Wilson said.

"We've had rescues that were definitely tough, but nothing of this magnitude," said lifeguard Supervisor Hans Fernan. "This had high surf, multiple victims and no visibility."

The teens were taken to a Chula Vista hospital, where they were treated for hypothermia and released.

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