



Surfer Punches Shark During Attack In Monterey Bay



MONTEREY COUNTY, Calif. - A surfer was attacked by a shark in Monterey Bay early Tuesday and airlifted to a hospital with bite wounds to his torso and thigh, according to hospital and state park officials. [Images Of Bitten Board, Police Response](#)

The 24-year-old victim, whose name was not released, was surfing with a half dozen other people at Marina State Beach when the shark attacked him from behind around 11 a.m., according to Loren Rex, a California State Parks spokesman.

The victim screamed and started punching the shark while trying to flee, Rex said.

"Then the shark took him down under the water," he said. "Witnesses saw a lot of thrashing and some blood coming up. Other witnesses saw the shark let him up before biting him one more time."

One witness said the shark was at least 20 feet long, which rescuers were not able to immediately confirm, Rex said.

Surfers pulled the victim to shore and administered first aid, using a surf leash and a blanket as tourniquets to stop the bleeding until rescuers could arrive, Rex said.

The victim was conscious and breathing when he was taken away by ambulance. He was then airlifted to Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose, where he was in fair and stable condition Tuesday afternoon with lacerations to his torso and thigh, according to hospital spokeswoman Joy Alexiou.

The victim was going into surgery and was expected to survive, Alexiou said.

The Monterey County beach, located about 35 miles south of Santa Cruz, is well known for its sand dunes, hang gliding and rugged surf with very strong rip currents. The area where the surfer was attacked is considered an advanced surfing spot suitable only for skilled surfers.

Because of the attack, state officials closed all the beaches from Monterey State Beach to Moss Landing, a 15-mile stretch where people were forbidden from entering the water Tuesday.

Rex said this was the first recorded shark attack at Marina State Beach, but added that some divers have been attacked in Monterey Bay.

A marine biologist said the shark probably thought the surfer was a seal.

"They don't come in close just to get ahold of people," said marine biologist Steven Webster. "This is more often than not a case of mistaken identity." Brian Simpson said he heard the man screaming. He said the victim got himself to the beach.

"I wanted to help him, but I was too far away to really do anything, and then at that point, I was afraid for my own life," said Simpson.

Other surfers used their surf board leashes as tourniquets.

Witnesses said the surfer is well known in the area.

A surfer who was riding the same wave as the man who was attacked said he saw thrashing and lots of blood.

It was unknown what kind of shark bit the surfer.

This is the first shark attack in the history of the Marina State beach.

It happened in 6 to 20 feet of water, 100 yards from shore. That is shallow for a shark attack, according to experts.