

# Lawmakers Seek to Protect Americans from Beach Umbrellas This Summer

As it happens on most every Memorial Day, the beaches are sure to soon be filled with families covered in sunscreen and lying under umbrellas – that is, unless federal regulators have their way. Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Mark Warner (D-VA) are [calling on](#) the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to recall umbrellas they feel are... dangerous. And the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is [considering](#) broadening regulations of sunscreen that would propel prices even higher than they are now. It seems politicians really don't know how to relax.

## Of Umbrella-Related Injuries

As families load up their cars to head to the beach, parents will inevitably remind children of the hazards that come along with the sand and sea. Kids should be careful not to step on broken glass or a family of crabs. Swimmers should be especially cautious about getting carried out in a riptide and unwittingly playing out the plot of Jaws.

For some reason, however, the prospect of a beach umbrella being untethered from the sand and impaling beachgoers is something that keeps lawmakers up at night. Sens. Menendez and Warner [wrote to the CPSC](#) that

*a burst of wind can make these summer accessories harmful to those around them...Over the last several years, reports of horrific injuries resulting from beach umbrellas have splashed across the media.*

They cite CPSC data showing around 3,000 injuries a year from umbrellas, though, they admit, there's no way of telling what kind of umbrellas these are: patio or beach.

Regardless of where they occur, these umbrella-related injuries are negligible when considering the sheer number of people who use beach umbrellas every year. Even assuming that all of these injuries were at the beach, the chance of getting impaled by a flying umbrella [is still probably lower](#) than getting injured on the drive to the shore.

Even if the CPSC listened to these dull lawmakers pushing for duller regulations, it doesn't mean the "problem" would go away. To rid umbrellas of their pointed ends would be to make them even more likely to become untethered, battering into unsuspecting guests.

If beach umbrellas become less reliable, at least loungers can rely on a strong grade of sunscreen to protect them against harmful rays – FDA permitting.

But even that could soon be limited. The agency proposed a rule in February that would update labeling requirements, including [a notification](#) "for sunscreens that have not been shown to help prevent skin cancer." The FDA is also examining the safety of ingredients that go into products, requesting piles of data from the companies that produce sunscreen.

## **The Real Danger: Needless Red Tape**

While examining safety is an integral part of the FDA's mission, wading into effectiveness testing and labeling would repeat what the market already does but with significant added costs. Consumer Reports, for instance, has [investigated](#) dozens of sunscreens and loudly called out those that fail to live up to their SPF claims.

No company wants to be embarrassed by a Consumer Reports

exposé, which is why the majority of sunscreens meet the claims on their labels. Every year, more sunscreens vie for the attention of reporters and popular magazines, leading to an increased pile of resources that inform consumers about which products are the [most effective](#).

This Memorial Day, regulators across the federal government must resist calls to cordon off the beach in a thicket of needless red tape. Beach umbrellas and sunscreen give millions of vacationers peace of mind when venturing out onto the sand, and needless rules would just get in the way of a fun, safe time. Bureaucrats need to resist the riptide of ridiculous regulations and focus on some of the things that could actually use their attention.

—

*This article was originally published on [FEE.org](#). Read the [original article](#).*

[Image Credit: Flickr-Ralph Daily [CC BY 2.0](#)]