Beat: Miscellaneous

Surfer fights off shark attack off Australia's east coast, loses finger

-, 30.12.2012, 03:26 Time

USPA News - A surfer fought off an attack by a suspected bull shark off Australia`s east coast on Friday but lost a finger in the process and suffered a serious bite to the thigh, paramedics said on Saturday. It follows a fatal attack in Western Australia in July.

Michelle Hoctor, a spokeswoman for the Ambulance Service of New South Wales (NSW), said it responded to Diamond Head near Port Macquarie, a city on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales, after receiving a 000 emergency call at approximately 10:45 a.m. local time on Friday. Officials said the 29-year-old victim was surfing near a beach along an unpatrolled location between Port Macquarie and Crowdy Head when the shark bit him on the thigh. "He also sustained injuries to his hand trying to force the shark away," a Surf Life Saving NSW spokesperson said. Hoctor said paramedics found the man with multiple shark bites to his right hand and right thigh. "The man lost his index finger and knuckle as a result of the attack," she said. "He was given pain relief and fluids at the scene, and taken to John Hunter Hospital in a serious but stable condition." Friday`s incident came after a 24-year-old surfer was killed in a savage shark attack off Western Australia in July, but Surf Life Saving NSW Lifesaving Manager Dean Storey reiterated the risk of shark attacks or encounters are very low and that people are at a far greater risk of drowning. "Holiday-makers who are concerned about sharks should stick to swimming at patrolled locations. That way lifesavers and lifeguards can clear the water in the event of a shark sighting and first aid support and equipment is immediately available," Storey said. He pointed out that five people drowned in NSW this month alone. According to statistics released in February by the International Shark Attack File (ISAF) at the University of Florida, sharks killed at least 12 people worldwide last year, making it the highest number in nearly two decades. Surfers were the most affected group, accounting for about 60 percent of unprovoked attacks.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-377/surfer-fights-off-shark-attack-off-australiaund39s-east-coast-loses-finger.html

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619