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Death of five surfers in storm shocks Netherlands

Fears more victims could be found after experienced group caught in heavy seas and thick sea foam off coast of The Hague

[Graham Russell](#)



Relatives, friends and the surf community gather on The Hague beach where five surfers drowned during a storm. Photograph: Pierre Crom/Getty Images

At least five experienced surfers have drowned after going out in stormy weather off the coast of The Hague, Dutch authorities have said.

The group of men, aged between 22 and 38, were among 10 surfers and swimmers who took to the water in Scheveningen on Monday evening in heavy weather that generated a thick layer of sea foam and hampered rescue efforts.

Three of the bodies were not found until Tuesday morning and police remain unclear if more would be discovered, after the coast guard picked up more surfboards than victims. The fifth body was spotted but had not been recovered by Tuesday afternoon.

Rescuers could be seen searching through the foam, which was waist deep on the beach.

On Tuesday evening, people gathered at the nearby surf school to lay tributes to the dead, who reportedly included surf school instructors and lifeguards. "This is beyond comprehension. They are boys who know what they are doing," one visitor [told De Telegraaf](#).

The Holland Surfing Association [thanked rescue workers](#) for their efforts and said the shock went throughout the country's surf community. "We are deeply mourning this loss," it said.

A spokesman for the lifeguard service KNRM said in a statement: "I speak on behalf of every Hagenaar and every Scheveninger when I say that we sympathise deeply and stand with their loved ones.

"The strong wind from a northern direction and strong sea current due to the spring tide made the joint search actions a tricky job."

In Belgium, flags at surf clubs were flown at half mast.

Scheveningen is a popular North Sea surfing spot that relies on storms near the coast to generate rideable waves.

The Hague's night mayor, Pat Smith, said he knew two of the victims very well, and [told a local radio station](#): "Like me, they were internationally trained lifeguards. They have worked in Australia and received heavy training from an international water sports association. Yesterday they were training on the water. They got lost in the foam."



Surfers gather at the Scheveningen surf school to lay tributes. Photograph: Pierre Crom/Getty Images

Three of the victims were from the Hague – aged 24, 30, and 38 – and two were from Delft, aged 22 and 23.

One other man, aged 40, was treated in hospital on Monday and later released.

Johan Remkes, the acting mayor in The Hague, said: "The grief in the Scheveningen community is unimaginable. It is known here better than anywhere that 'the sea gives and the sea takes', but the way so many young lives are now being broken down and so many families and groups of friends have been affected is unprecedentedly cruel."

Remkes said an extensive investigation would be launched into the cause of the deaths.