

# 2007 Drowning Statistics Continue Downward Trend

There were a total of 110 drowning deaths in New Zealand in 2007. The announcement of the official drowning toll by Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) indicates the continuing trend of declining drowning numbers. It is the second lowest annual toll since records began in 1980. The 2007 toll is 21% above the record low 2006 annual drowning toll of 91.

The average annual drowning toll for the last five years (2002 – 2006) is 120. In comparison to 10 years ago the toll is 20% below the drowning deaths recorded for 1997.

The recently released World Drowning Report (International Life Saving Federation) lists New Zealand as the third highest country in the world for drowning deaths. All drowning incidents in New Zealand are captured by DrownBase™, recognised around the world as the leader in integrated drowning databases.

WSNZ General Manager, Matt Claridge says “the ongoing steady reduction in drowning incidents continues to be reflected on an annual basis. By consistently achieving a toll below the annual average, we are satisfied that the concentrated education efforts of the water safety sector are making a positive difference. The ongoing overall reductions must be tempered by the acknowledgement that New Zealand has a very high toll relative to international standards”.

## **2007 Drowning Analysis:**

### **Activity**

51 (46%) of all drowning deaths in 2007 were *Recreational* based. This means that the victim was in, on or under the water for recreational purposes.

The major reduction was noted in the number of Boating related drowning deaths with 13 (11%), which is below the annual average (last five years) of 18 (15%).

Other Recreational drowning analysis as follows:

- Underwater Activities (scuba diving, snorkelling and free diving) total eight (7%) deaths, the highest since 2003 when there were 10 (8%).
- Water Sport activities account for 21 (19%) of all deaths, the highest since 2004 when 23 (19%) were recorded. 15 (14%) deaths were swimming related, the highest since 2003 when 18 (14%) was recorded.

There were 34 (31%) *Non-Recreational* drowning deaths in 2007, all of which were Accidental Immersions for example, a slip, trip or fall into the water.

In addition there were 25 (23%) *Other* drowning deaths from activities such as Road Vehicle and Suicide.

### ***Environment***

34 (31%) drowning deaths occurred in Rivers. The lowest recorded level since 2003 when there were 33 (27%) river related drowning deaths.

The number of drownings at Surf Beaches was 17 (15%) in 2007, the highest since 2003 when 20 (16%) deaths were recorded.

There were no deaths at Calm Water Beaches in 2007. This is the first time there have been no recorded deaths at Calm Water Beaches since Drowning Statistics have been kept from 1980. The annual average (last five years) is 7 (6%) drowning deaths.

The lowest number of deaths around the Rocky Foreshore, 3 (3%) was achieved since 1998 when there were 3 (2%) deaths. The Rocky Foreshore is synonymous for fishing and gathering kaimoana.

Tragically there were 9 (8%) drownings in Home Pools in New Zealand in 2007. This is the highest since 2001 when there were 9 (7%). The Home Pool is the most prevalent site for the drowning of small children aged 1-4 years.

### ***Demographic***

76% of all drowning victims were male.



The total number of Maori drowning deaths has increased to 29 (26%) the highest since the 30 (25%) recorded in 2001. Beaches and Offshore sites contributed to the increase along with activities such as Swimming and Underwater (scuba diving, snorkelling and free diving).

11 (10%) of the 2007 drowning population were Pacific Peoples, the highest recording since 11 (9%) drowned in 2004. The annual average (last five years) is 7 (6%).

There were 3 (3%) Asian drowning victims in 2007, the annual average (last five years) is 11 (10%).

The most at-risk age group for drowning was 45 – 54 years with 21 (19%) deaths. Historically the most at-risk age group sits been between the 15 – 44 years.

There were 11 (10%) drowning deaths in the 0 – 4 years age group, the highest since 2002 when 14 (11%) were recorded. Invariably a preschool drowning is the result of a lack of supervision and typically occurs in the bath, home swimming pool or the environment accessed from the dwelling.

The recent high drowning rate noted in those aged 65 + years has dissipated in the short term with 15 (14%) recorded in 2007 compared to 21 (23%) and 19 (21%) for 2006 and 2005 respectively.

### **Regional**

The following summarises the Top 5 regions for drowning on a per capita (n=100,000) basis:

<b>Regional Council</b>	<b>Drowning Deaths Per Capita</b>
West Coast	16.0
Taranaki	5.8
Northland	5.4
Waikato	4.7
Tasman/Nelson	4.6

### **Additional**

The summer months of January (15), February (16) and December (17) contributed to 44% of the total drowning toll for the calendar year.

The 17 deaths in December were the highest since 19 were recorded in 1999. February, April and December were notably above the annual average (last five years) for the equivalent month.

The four drowning deaths recorded in May are the lowest ever since drowning statistics have been kept from 1980.

Claridge continues: “the primary intervention to further reduce drowning incidents in New Zealand is for all children to learn to swim. The internationally recognised approach is one that should ensure all New Zealand children develop valuable swim and survival skills. The ability to enjoy New Zealand’s waterways safely, whether recreating or not, is dependant on the development and acquisition of swim and survival skills. This should of course be complimented with additional water safety education opportunities or specific information depending on activities or area’s of interest.”

“Maori and Pacific People continue to be over represented when analysing drowning statistics. Recognition of this has lead to specific strategies targeting these ethnic groups which will be augmented by regional initiatives that deliver directly to those most at risk”.

...Ends...

See following for:

1. 2007 Annual Fact Sheet
2. Annual Activity Report
3. Drowning Statistics Graph

**For more information or interview contact:**

Matt Claridge

General Manager

Phone: (04) 801 9600

Mobile: (027) 478 1836

Email: [matt@watersafety.org.nz](mailto:matt@watersafety.org.nz)



# 2007 Drowning Fact Sheet

Provisional Statistics as at 4 January 2008

110

## Drowned in New Zealand in the year 2007

51	46%	<b>Recreational Drownings</b>
6	5%	Power Boating (over 4m, under 4m, jet boating, etc)
7	6%	Non-Power Boating (sailing, kayaking, rowing craft / dinghy, etc)
9	8%	Land Based Fishing (angling, net or shell fishing)
8	7%	Underwater Activities (scuba diving, snorkelling & freediving)
21	19%	Water Sport / Recreation (swimming, diving/jumping, board-riding etc)

## Non-Recreational Drownings

34	31%	Immersion Incidents
34	31%	Occupational Related
-	0%	

## Activity-Other Drownings (road vehicle accidents, suicide, other)

## Environment Breakdown

34	31%	Rivers (rivers, creeks and streams)
20	18%	Beaches (surf or calm water beaches and rocky foreshore)
17	15%	Offshore (0-1, 1-5 & 5Km + offshore)
12	11%	Tidal Waters (harbour, marina, estuary or river/harbour bar)
10	9%	Inland Still Waters (lakes, ponds, drains)
6	5%	Domestic Environment (baths, buckets, paddling pools)
9	8%	Home Pools (home pool or spa pool)
2	2%	Public Pools (public, thermal, hotel/motel, other)

## Ethnicity breakdown

3	3%	Asians
29	26%	Maori
60	55%	NZ Europeans
4	4%	Other
11	10%	Pacific Peoples
3	3%	Unknown

## Gender Breakdown

84	76%	Male
26	24%	Female

## Age Breakdown

11	10%	0 - 4 years
3	3%	5 - 14 years
20	18%	15 - 24 years
15	14%	25 - 34 years
14	13%	35 - 44 years
21	19%	45 - 54 years
11	10%	55 - 64 years
15	14%	65 + years

# Water Safety New Zealand Annual Drowning Statistics by Activity to 2007



## Provisional Statistics

Activity	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Totals
<b>Recreational</b>																					
Land Based Fishing																					
Angling	4	10	5	10	5	4	9	4		7	3	4	5	5	8	1	5	10	2	3	104
Net Fishing	3				2	8	1			2	1	4		2	2	5	3	2	3	5	43
Shellfishing			2	1	1		1	4	1	4	1	1		3	4	2	3	1	1	1	31
Non Powered Boat																					
Canoeing	1			1	2	4		3		1	1			4	4						21
Kayaking		2	1	2		3	1	1		1	1		6	1	2	3	6	2	2	2	36
Rafting	5	2	3		4		4	2					2	2		1		1		1	27
Rowing Craft / Dinghy	3	6	6		6	5		5	4	6			1	2	6	5	3	3	5	1	71
Powered Boat																					
Jet Boat	1	2	3	1				2	2								1				12
Jet Skis	1					1					1										4
Over 4m	2	11	8	4	3	6	4	3	7	3	2	5	6	1	5	8	7	4	6	2	97
Under 4m	7	6	11	5	6	15	8	3	7	2	10	5	8	9	8	2		2	2	3	119
Sailing																					
Fixed Keel Boat	1	2	2	2	1		1	3	2	3		2	2		1	1					23
Offshore Sailing		1			3			3			2			1	1		1	2			14
Sailing Dinghy		2				1															3
Trailer Sailer	2	1			1				1	1											6
Underwater																					
Free Diving				1			1	1							2	1		1		1	8
Scuba Diving	7	3	7	6	3	6	6	6	6	7	5	3	7	1	4	8		4	3	5	97
Snorkelling	1	2	2	2	4	1	4	5	1	3	3	1	3	3	2	1	2	1	3	2	46
Water Sport / Recreation																					
Board Riding		1				1	1				1	2	1			2	3		1	1	14
Boogie Boarding				1				1			3	1		2	1	1	3				13
Diving / Jumping	1	2	1			1	3	1	1	5	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	3		4	33
Non-Water Related	8	5	4	3	5	4	6	11	5	1	1	2	3		1	3	1	1	5	2	71
Swimming	15	11	26	18	7	12	17	22	19	18	27	18	10	9	13	18	14	13	10	15	312
Tubing	1		1	1			1		1					1			1				7
Water Skiing													1	1							2
Windsurfing			1										2	1							4
<b>Total Recreational</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1218</b>
<b>Non-Recreational</b>																					
Immersion Incident																					
Accidental Immersion	43	40	41	30	30	25	32	24	35	32	38	33	33	32	41	31	25	26	29	32	652
Flood/Civil Emergen	4												1		1		1				7
Rescuing Others	2	3	4	4	5	2		1	1	2	3	2	4	2	5	1	3	2	1	1	48
Occupational Related																					
Commercial Fishing	15	4	4	6	7	10	1	4	18		9	4	4	3	1	1	5	3			99
<b>Total Non-Recreational</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>806</b>
<b>Activity - Other</b>																					
Other Activities																					
Aircraft		3	1	1		1	2				4	2					1		2		17
Homicide		1		2	1					5	1		3	2			1		1	2	19
Other Commercial	3			2		2		5	1	3	2	1	4					3	2	1	29
Passenger Ship	2																				2
Road Vehicle	21	24	9	22	15	18	14	25	15	12	12	12	10	15	12	18	17	18	8	10	307
Suicide	14	18	14	22	19	24	13	20	13	20	14	18	16	14	15	12	16	16	9	12	319
<b>Total Activity - Other</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>693</b>
<b>Total Drownings</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>2717</b>



# New Zealand Drowning Statistics 1980-2007

