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Media Release

For immediate release



Holiday Drowning Toll Hits 10

The Christmas and New Year holiday period has resulted in ten drowning deaths in New Zealand.

Statistics released today by Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) for the holiday period show that there were eight recreational drowning deaths and two non recreational. The holiday period drowning toll is the highest in four years, since a total of 11 were recorded in 2003/04.

The average holiday period toll (last five years) is six drowning deaths.

The following summarise the holiday period drowning fatalities:

Ethnicity:

- 4 Pacific Peoples
- 3 Maori
- 3 European

Sex:

- 8 Male
- 2 Female

Age:

- 1 0-4 years
- 1 5-14 years
- 2 15-24 years
- 2 25-34 years
- 1 35-44 years
- 2 45-54 years
- 1 55 +

Location:

- 3 River
- 3 0-1 km off shore
- 1 Lake
- 1 Home Pool
- 1 Public Pool
- 1 5 + km offshore



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- Activity:
- 4 Swimming
 - 2 Scuba Diving
 - 2 Powered Boat
 - 2 Accidental Immersion

WSNZ General Manager, Matt Claridge comments; “it is disappointing that the holiday toll is greater than one per day, but the reality is that this time of year is when New Zealanders are more likely to drown. 80 % of the drowning deaths have been recreational based. A statistic that is not surprising given the nature of holidays and increases in aquatic based recreational activity. Many of the victims appear to have been on holiday and ventured into aquatic environments that they have little knowledge of and the inherent risks associated with it.”

“We are fortunate not to be counting the cost of another handful of fatalities given the number of near misses and close calls in particular those where multiple potential victims have had to be rescued. There have been several major rescues that have fortunately eventuated in only minor injuries or those involved being unharmed. ”

“The large proportion of Pacific People and Maori drowning deaths highlight the importance of the respective specific strategies for each of these ethnic groups and the ongoing need to ensure New Zealand communities receive adequate and appropriate water safety education through a variety of channels.”

Claridge concludes “the low holiday period toll of two from last year and the record low annual toll for 2006 are well behind us as we consider the ongoing need for New Zealanders to possess water safety skills, most specifically the ability to swim and survive. Avoiding complacency and possessing the knowledge to exhibit a reasonable level of water safety awareness prior to enjoying one of the many aquatic activities New Zealand has to offer during summer is also of importance.”

Ends...

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