

Will the Holiday Season be Drowning Season Again?

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) is encouraging all New Zealanders to take care and be mindful of water safety precautions when on holiday over the festive season. Last year 11 people drowned during the Christmas/New Year holiday period, up by one from the 2007/08 toll of 10.

Over the last 10 years the holiday period drowning toll has averaged 8 deaths. This year's holiday period commences at 4:00 pm on Thursday the 24th of December and ends at 6:00 am on Tuesday the 5th of January.

The summer holiday season is an obvious time of year for an increase in recreational activity in, on or under the water, due to so many New Zealanders being on holiday. It is also a predictable time of year for drowning deaths to occur.

WSNZ General Manager, Matt Claridge says; "The holiday season is a relaxing time for many including getting back to the boat, doing some diving and fishing, or just being near the water. These activities will provide a great deal of enjoyment for most, however, for too many families they will result in an outcome for which some basic attention to safety equipment, knowing your limits and supervising small children would have prevented a tragedy."

Statistically, males aged 15-45 are the most at risk group as they rush to enjoy fishing, diving, boating and other water based pursuits. Too often, poor decision making or a lack of preparation leads to a fatal misjudgment.

Claridge continues; "Maori and Pacific ethnic groups have been a prominent feature of the holiday drowning toll in the last two years, more so than the already disproportionate representation in annual drowning statistics."

It is important that New Zealanders understand that the ability to swim and survive is a fundamental skill all New Zealanders should possess in order to enjoy summer and the water safely.+

Boaties and Fishermen need to carry correctly fitting lifejackets for all crew whilst out on a boat and two forms of communication.+

For parents, uncompromised supervision is the best layer of protection from the risk of drowning. Never be complacent or trust the care of young, weak or non-competent swimmers with others. Your child means your responsibility regardless of the environment.+

Drowning and water safety information is available from Water Safety New Zealand website; www.watersafety.org.nz

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