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Media Release
For Immediate Release



Boating Incidents Dominate August Fatalities

Six drowning fatalities resulting from recreational boating incidents stand out in statistics released by Water Safety New Zealand today. The total number of drowning deaths in August is provisionally reported at nine.

There have been 84 deaths in the year to date, only three below the total number of drowning deaths recorded in all of 2010 (87).

Disturbingly, a lack of lifejackets has been a contributing factor in at least three boating and kayaking incidents and is a possibility in another three recreational drownings.

Matt Claridge, General Manager, WSNZ comments: "Boating and life jackets should be joined at the hip, much like wearing a seat belt in a car. In small craft they should be worn at all times, incidents happen quickly with little or no warning and often there is no time to put a life jacket on."

In addition to the recreational boating incidents, one accidental immersion and two probable suicides make up the balance of fatal drowning incidents in August. All nine fatalities were males aged between 19 and 63 years of age.

Claridge continues, "It is now evident that the drowning toll in 2011 will go well beyond that recorded last year. How far this number will rise will be dependent upon the attitudes and behaviour of people as they enjoy aquatic environments through to the end of 2011. The incidents recorded this month clearly show how unforgiving the environment is to those who choose to ignore basic safety precautions."

Concerns over a blow out in drowning numbers are underlined by the fact that New Zealand is only just entering Spring and the four months left in 2011 are those where participation levels in aquatic activity will surge in line with warmer weather

Claridge concludes: "We are a nation of people that depend on the water and this is something we rightly celebrate. What is so disappointing is that many of our drowning



victims need not have ended up as a fatal statistic recorded on a spreadsheet. Like most aspects of life, commonsense is your best shield against getting into trouble. People know the weather in spring is extremely changeable, they know lifejackets are mandatory for any sort of boating activity. Yet, time and time again, we see that in the rush to enjoy the water these most basic precautions are disregarded and what could have been a minor incident escalates into a tragedy.”

Ends...

For more information or interview contact:

Matt Claridge

WSNZ General Manager

Phone: (04) 801 9600

Mobile: (027) 478 1836

Email: matt@watersafety.org.nz

WATER SAFETY NEW ZEALAND

Formed in 1949, WSNZ is the national organisation responsible for water safety education in New Zealand.

WSNZ manages the delivery of education based drowning prevention and water safety initiatives into communities.

WSNZ is the lead agency for Swim and Survive activity in New Zealand. The Sealord Swim For Life initiative is WSNZ's major project. WSNZ seeks to address a dramatic decline in swimming ability of our youth. Sealord Swim For Life is a comprehensive national project established to:

- Provide all children with access to the water;
- Facilitate the delivery of quality swim and survive programmes in primary schools;
- Provide the foundations for the development of a culture that produces generations of New Zealand families that are water safe.

For more information go to www.sealordswimforlife.org.nz

