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Media Release
For Immediate Release



Drowning Toll Rises by 46%

15 Drowning deaths in the month of February have taken the national drowning toll for the first two months of 2011 to 35; this is a 46% increase in the number of fatalities compared with the same period for 2010 when 24 deaths had been recorded.

During February there have been seven Recreational drownings, four Non-Recreational and four classified as Other which includes road vehicle and commercial incidents confirmed by Water Safety New Zealand.

Matt Claridge, General Manager, WSNZ comments, "We know that drowning incidents will peak over the summer months as people take advantage of time away from work and the warmer weather to enjoy aquatic based activities, but to have such a dramatic increase in terms of a comparison with last years statistics is very discouraging."

12 of the 15 deaths (80%) occurred in the top half of the North Island, Northland (two), Auckland (five), Waikato (two) and the Bay of Plenty (three). Environments that dominate recorded incidents are again beaches (five) and rivers and streams (four).

"People are continuing to ignore safety considerations when swimming, whether it is swimming alone, swimming in areas that are obviously dangerous or beyond a person's skill level, the inevitable result is that lives are lost."

Accidental Immersions accounted for three deaths during February. All three were young children who had access to water whilst unsupervised.

"These type of incidents just don't need to happen. Young children are notorious in their desire for exploring new and exciting environments, parents know this yet all too often supervision standards are inadequate. While we feel for the families involved there is really no excuse for these incidents.

"Parents and caregivers must ensure that young children are appropriately supervised at all times when recreating in, or near the water. In addition they must provide a safe home environment and ensure that all potential water hazards are nullified or unsupervised access is not possible."

Ends...



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WATER SAFETY NEW ZEALAND

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

WSNZ manages drowning prevention and water safety in communities through education. WSNZ administers proven, proactive and preventative education interventions.

WSNZ leads the Learn to Swim and Survive sector 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.

