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Media Release
For immediate release



APPROACH OF LABOUR WEEKEND SIGNALS WATER SAFETY CONCERNS

Warmer weather and the first public holiday of spring traditionally triggers a rise in aquatic based activity.

“For most people aquatic activity is not something they associate with winter but come spring we head en masse to the water. Greater numbers enjoying the water typically equates to an increase in drowning and injury incidents but with the right attitude and people taking personal responsibility for their safety around water and responsibility for those in their care, the corresponding rise in incidents doesn’t have to occur,” explains Matt Claridge, General Manager, Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ).

WSNZ reports that drowning incidents this year are well down on historical averages, 62 year to date as opposed to a 5 year average (2005-2009) of 80, and is optimistic that this trend can be maintained if people adopt the right sort of attitudes and behaviour.

Water Safety New Zealand is particularly concerned about recreational boating and reminds boaties to undertake a thorough maintenance and safety check of their vessel and ensure life jackets are available for all on board and communication equipment (minimum of two forms of communication e.g. VHF radio, cell phone, flares, distress beacon) are available and working.

“Spring weather is notorious for the swift changes that can occur with the conditions, therefore it is imperative that anyone planning to go boating and fishing gets a marine weather forecast, listen for regular updates and leaves detailed information with someone responsible about where they are going, who they are with and when

they plan to return - don't let the rush to enjoy the water lead to tragedy," warns Claridge.

But it's not just the big kids that need take care in the water. Parents must take responsibility for ensuring all members of the family stay safe and proper supervision of young children is of critical importance. Proper supervision in and around water means a responsible adult keeping young children in their care both WITHIN SIGHT and WITHIN REACH.

Claridge concludes, "Children should be encouraged to enjoy the water. It's important that parents start the education process early and are actively involved. Teach children some simple safety rules, and provide plenty of opportunities for supervised and fun water experiences this summer. The confidence they develop will support future learning and will make it much easier for the child to learn to swim".

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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 targets drowning prevention and water safety in communities through education. WSNZ oversees proven, proactive and preventative education interventions. In addition, WSNZ prioritizes leadership, collaboration and enabling the water safety sector with resourcing, research, planning and communication.

WSNZ is the lead agency for the Swim and Survive sector in New Zealand. The Swim For Life initiative is WSNZ's major project. WSNZ seeks to address a dramatic decline in swimming ability of our youth. The Swim For Life initiative is an overarching, 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.