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Media Release
For immediate release



TIS THE SEASON TO REMEMBER WATER SAFETY

Last summer, ten New Zealanders drowned between 4pm Christmas Eve and 6am January 5th. In a year that has already seen 117 Kiwis lose their lives to drowning (30 more than last year's total figure), Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) is calling for caution and reminding holidaymakers about the basic water safety precautions.

WSNZ's chief executive Matt Claridge says the drowning toll for the year to date is unacceptably high.

"Our drowning death toll has been in decline over the past two decades, but - tragically - this year the trend has reversed."

"Many deaths can be avoided if people behave responsibly and remember the safety basics. With thousands of New Zealanders flocking to beaches, lakes and rivers during the holiday period, we're asking people to use their common sense and make safety the first priority when in and around the water."

Historical trends suggest that it will be boaties, divers, fisherman and swimmers who are most likely to feature in drowning incidents through the holiday period.

"Wear life jackets, check the weather forecast, stay within your limits, don't swim alone and avoid alcohol. It's not rocket science but it could save your life," Mr Claridge says.

Children are particularly vulnerable, and of last year's ten Christmas/New Year period deaths two were children aged under five. This year there have been 14 preschoolers drown in New Zealand, he says.

"Caregivers need to provide active supervision, that is always keeping their child in line of sight and close enough to be provided with immediate assistance if required. We encourage



parents to enjoy the water with their children and take the opportunity to further their child's water safety education.”

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Mr Claridge says the organisation has put together a reminder of its top tips for safe water recreation these holidays, in the hope that they will save lives.

“We're hoping New Zealanders will remember the safety basics and have a lot of fun in the water this summer. No more unnecessary tragedies please.”

Ends...

ATTACHED: WSNZ'S TOP TIPS FOR A SAFE FESTIVE SEASON

WATER SAFETY NEW ZEALAND'S TOP TIPS FOR A SAFE FESTIVE SEASON

- Stop and think before entering the water – am I acting safely
- Actively supervise the kids – keep them within sight and arms reach, at all times
- Stay off the booze – alcohol and water activities don't mix
- Don't swim or dive alone – take a buddy
- Check the marine weather forecast's good – before heading out on the water
- Always wear a lifejacket when you're boating
- Know your swimming ability and stay within your limits
- If the red and yellow flags are on the beach – swim between them
- Check how deep the water is before diving or jumping in
- Learn to swim – if you start now, you'll be ready for next summer

For more information or interview contact:

Matt Claridge

Chief Executive

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 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 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. The Sealord 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.

Our Way Of Life: National Water Safety Communications Campaign

TVNZ and New Zealand Post have partnered with WSNZ to deliver a water safety communications campaign across New Zealand.

'Our Way of Life' is the campaign theme.

Our Way of Life communicates that New Zealanders, by virtue of who we are and where we live, are predisposed to enjoying aquatic based activities and environments. The objective of the campaign is to encourage participation in all things aquatic, the associated benefits of this, but with the underlying message that all aquatic activity requires that safety is the first priority.

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