

Failure to Supervise Continues to Cost Lives!

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) today announced there were six drowning deaths in August. The statistics for the month have again highlighted the alarming number of tragedies involving preschool children who continue to drown.

WSNZ General Manager, Matt Claridge comments "This month we have witnessed another three separate incidents where young lives have been lost through immersion incidents. Five preschool children have drowned to date this year. In 2007, 11 (10%) of the total drowning toll were preschool children".

Claridge continues: "Parents and caregivers must understand and take responsibility for ensuring all children in their care are safe. Unfortunately the vast majority of children who drown are alone and unsupervised, or in the care of other children at the time".

Claridge urged parents to '**think about safety first**' and warns "water presents a real hazard to young children in and around the home. Children drown quickly and quietly, there is little noise as a small child slips below the surface. While physical barriers (i.e. compliant pool fences) are important they are only a starting point".

"Supervision without any distractions is the single most important precaution you can take. Children learn by exploring their environment, new adventures are only a few steps away. Appropriate supervision at bath time and around the home pool means a responsible adult keeping children within sight and reach at all times!"

Overall the national drowning toll for the year to date is 69, one below the 70 deaths recorded at this point last year. In addition to the three young children there were another two immersion incidents involving adult males. The single recreational based incident involved the capsizing of a yacht off the Bay of Plenty coast where one of the two crew members drowned before rescuers arrived.

Recreational activity represents 41 of the 69 fatalities (59%) this year and with the arrival of spring, participation in water based activities will increase. Inevitably this will coincide with an increase in incidents where lives are at threat.

All New Zealanders are reminded that whilst enjoying the water they must remember that any aquatic environment presents a potential threat, those who are inexperienced or unprepared are most at risk, in particular preschool children.

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