

Five Drown in Storms

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) has released drowning data for the month of July which indicates there were a total of eight fatalities for the month. The heavy storms and torrential weather conditions that battered most of New Zealand in late July contributed to five of these.

The storm related drownings occurred as a result of three separate incidents, two in Bay of Plenty (Canoeing and Commercial Fishing) and one in Northland (River Crossing), all of which contributed to the highest July drowning toll since 2002.

WSNZ General Manager, Matt Claridge comments; “for the second time this year storm weather has contributed to significant numbers of drowning deaths. While these incidents are separated geographically, they reinforce the same basic water safety messages such as being aware of the weather and marine conditions along with minimising risk taking in volatile conditions.”

There have been 63 drowning deaths for the year to date (end of July). Of note is the alarming number of multiple drowning incidents that have occurred this year. Six separate incidents have resulted in 17 drowning deaths from which, a further 15 individuals were fortunate enough to survive.

Claridge continues “the major concern, regardless of the total drowning toll is the number of Recreational related drowning deaths. They are the ones that are preventable. Obviously aquatic recreation involves a conscious decision to be in the water and with that is a need for safety, specifically survival ability, awareness and preparedness. The ability to swim has a major role to play in reducing the likelihood of any drowning incident, but sound decision making during the winter months is important for ensuring aquatic activity is enjoyed safely.”

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