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## Media Release

For immediate release



# Holiday Season is the Drowning Season

The drowning toll for 2007 to date is at 101. This is already an increase over the record low of 91 from 2006, but still below the annual average (last 10 years) of 126 drowning deaths per annum. With the summer holiday season about to commence the predictable surge in recreational activity around the water has begun, so to is the need to highlight some basic water safety messages.

Over the last 10 years the holiday period drowning toll has averaged 9 deaths. This years holiday period commences at 4:00 pm on Monday the 24<sup>th</sup> of December and ends at 6:00 am on Thursday the 3rd of January.

General Manager of Water Safety New Zealand, Matt Claridge says “the next two weeks presents the highest risk period of the year for drowning.”

Statistically males aged 15-45 are the most at risk group as they rush to enjoy fishing, diving, boating and other water based pursuits. To often, poor decision making or a lack of preparation leads to a fatal misjudgment.

“Unfortunately it seems almost inevitable that incidents which could have been avoided with a little common sense will again claim lives over the holiday period.” says Claridge.

Claridge continues; “summer is a time for families to spend time together, enjoy the warm weather and take advantage of opportunities to recreate in and around water. Of vital importance is that parents and caregivers of small children ensure that access to any body of water is not possible without appropriate adult supervision. Every year 10 children under the age of five needlessly drown (last 10 years) due to a lack of supervision”.

Drowning statistics obtained from DrownBase™ indicate that an average of nearly one drowning per day occurs from Christmas until school resumes in term one.

“The ability to swim and survive is a fundamental skill all New Zealanders should possess in order to enjoy summer and the water safely. Regardless of where people are recreating over

the next few weeks, attention must be paid to ensuring things like the location is safe and equipment is well maintained prior to venturing in, on or under the water.”

“Adults, parents and caregivers must understand their responsibilities with respect to children in their care especially around rivers, beaches and pools and to supervise children near water, ALWAYS!” concludes Claridge.

Drowning and water safety information is available from Water Safety New Zealand website; [www.watersafety.org.nz](http://www.watersafety.org.nz)

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