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**Media Release**

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## Tekapo Tragedy a Timely Reminder for Boaties

The boating incident at Lake Tekapo serves as a timely reminder for those intending to head out into the water this coming Labour Weekend.

Water Safety New Zealand's (WSNZ) General Manager, Matt Claridge, comments: "Labour Weekend typically commences the surge in boating related activity including fishing and diving for the coming summer period. Sadly, this brings with it an increase in water-related incidents and sometimes multiple drowning deaths due to the nature of boating."

Claridge urges boaties to "plan thoroughly before heading out into the water. Particularly:

- Check the weather and marine forecasts
- Ensure you have two forms of reliable communication
- Check that your equipment, especially the boat itself, is well maintained."

Claridge reminds all boaties that they are "legally required to ensure correctly fitting lifejackets are carried on board and worn whenever there is heightened risk. This rule clearly applies to anyone in a small craft in cold water and wearing heavy clothing. Every skipper is responsible for ensure the boat and those on board are safe and this includes ensuring they have the ability to signal distress with flares, radio or other effective means."

WSNZ drowning statistics show that the drowning toll for the year to date is at 74, compared to 77 for the same period last year. Claridge comments "the drowning numbers are not an indicator of future behaviour, nor are they ever cause to be complacent, which just so happens to be a contributing factor in a lot of boating drownings. The tragedy at Lake Tekapo has again highlighted how easily things can turn nasty and the importance of thorough preparation and planning for all possible eventualities."

...Ends...



**For more information or interview contact:**

**Matt Claridge**

General Manager

Phone: (04) 801 9600

Mobile: (027) 478 1836

Email: [matt@watersafety.org.nz](mailto:matt@watersafety.org.nz)

