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## Media Release

For immediate release



# February Drowning Deaths Dip

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) has released the drowning statistics for the month of February. These indicate there were 11 drowning deaths in New Zealand during February and subsequently a total of 26 for the year to date.

The annual average (2003 – 2007) for drowning deaths year to date (January – February) is 32. At the same time last year there were 31 drowning deaths.

The 11 drowning incidents recorded in February is below the five year average (2003-2007) of 14 deaths. There were 16 deaths in February 2007.

WSNZ General Manager, Matt Claridge comments “recreational drowning incidents are at their peak during summer and the last two months have been no exception to this. Fortunately water safety education outcomes have evidently been front of mind for New Zealanders whilst in, on, under or around the water as the toll for February has dipped below that for January.”

Of the 11 fatalities in February, eight were classified as **Recreational** with *Land Based Fishing* contributing to three deaths, two of whom were Pacific people. Two people drowned as a result of either being swept away whilst crossing a swollen river or in a water tank. There was one Windsurfing death, one swimming death and one *Boating* tragedy.

All three of the **Non Recreational** deaths were *Accidental Immersions* including a man who fell off a wharf, a one year old in a goldfish pond and another on the *Rocky Foreshore*.

Claridge continues “the end of summer an onset of autumn now brings a steady decline in recreational activity, with that is also a reminder of the importance of all New Zealanders developing swim and survival skills. Survival skills are essential for ensuring a decline in drowning incidents over time but, for most New Zealanders, they are skills vital for ensuring enjoyment and the safer involvement in recreational activities later in life.”

“The Swim For Life campaign is informing New Zealanders that swim and survive skills are an integral component in drowning prevention. Schools and parents can embrace learning to swim,

and they are. However, the challenges faced by parents are not entirely supported by existing education curriculum, thus limiting the uptake of a fundamental life skill, learn to swim.”

...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)