

## **MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE 12 March, 2010**

### **Positively identify your target beyond all doubt.**

That is the message of Mr Mike Spray, Firearms and Hunter Training Programme Manager for NZ Mountain Safety Council, as the Roar approaches.

During the roar in 2009 a young hunter failed to identify his target beyond all doubt. He shot his hunting companion in the arm thinking he was a deer. The injury was horrendous and the victim was lucky to survive. There have been five such incidents in the past five years; three of them have been fatal. Mr Spray states that whilst these incidents are not frequent they are extremely tragic and all hunters should acknowledge that it could happen to them. Hunters need to consider safe hunting practice at all times says Mr Spray.

Identifying the target beyond all doubt is one of the seven basic rules of safe firearms handling and should be second nature to all hunters. Hunters should sight the head, neck and shoulder of the animal all at the same time, or at least sufficient of the animal to confirm target identification.

“No shooter should fire at shape, colour, movement or sound”. Beware – under certain circumstances the brain can trick the eyes. Assume any shape, colour, movement or sound is a human until you can prove otherwise say’s Mr Spray.

Wearing hi visibility clothing that contrasts with the environment, including deer, can help you be seen by other hunters. Ultimately, though the responsibility of target identification lies in the hands of the shooter.

In all the deer hunter deaths over the past five years the shooter and the victim were in the same hunting party. They began their hunt together but then separated. I suggest that if you lose visual contact with your companion, stop hunting until you have regained and confirmed visual contact say’s Mr Spray. And never shoot in the direction you know others to be.

Mr Spray say’s. “I wish all deer hunters a safe and successful roar, but please identify you target so that there is no doubt it is a deer before you are tempted to pull the trigger”.

### **The Seven Basic Rules of Safe Firearms Handling**

1. **TREAT EVERY FIREARM AS LOADED**
  - Check every firearm yourself.
  - Pass or accept only an open or unloaded firearm.
2. **ALWAYS POINT FIREARMS IN A SAFE DIRECTION**
  - Loaded or unloaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
3. **LOAD A FIREARM ONLY WHEN READY TO FIRE**
  - Load only the magazine after you reach your shooting area.
  - Load the chamber only when ready to shoot.
  - Completely unload before leaving the shooting area.
4. **IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET BEYOND ALL DOUBT**
  - Movement, colour, sound and shape can all deceive you.
  - Assume colour, shape, sound, and shape to be human until proven otherwise
5. **CHECK YOUR FIRING ZONE**
  - **THINK!** What may happen if you miss your target? What might you hit between you and the target or beyond?
  - Do not fire knowing others are in your firing zone
6. **STORE FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION SAFELY**
  - When not in use, lock away the bolt, firearm and ammunition separately.
  - Never leave firearms in a vehicle that is unattended
7. **AVOID ALCOHOL AND DRUGS WHEN HANDLING FIREARMS**
  - Good judgement is the key to safe use of firearms.



**MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL**

**DISCOVER  
MORE, SAFELY.**