

7 April 2011

## **MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS TAKING APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES WHEN VENTURING INTO REMOTE AREAS**

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council today recommends taking appropriate communications equipment when heading out into remote areas, in case of emergency.

On Wednesday 6 April a search and rescue team successfully found a hunter who became lost whilst shooting deer in the Ngapuketuru track in Kaimanawa Forest Park. With darkness falling and conditions deteriorating, the Turangi hunter was able to use his cell phone to contact Police who launched an immediate search and rescue operation. Using a combination of text messages and carefully managed rifle shots, the SAR team were eventually able to locate the missing man.

Chris Owens, Mountain Safety Council Programme Manager for Bushcraft & Outdoor Leader said:

“Whilst cell phone coverage is generally good across New Zealand, their usefulness in remote wilderness areas can be very limited. People venturing out into the wilderness are reminded not to be reliant on cell phones in case of emergency and to choose one of a range of communications options available like a Mountain Radio, Satellite Phone or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).”

Mountain radios are considered one of the best forms of backcountry communication, providing two- way communication in many areas where a cell phone would not work. They are available for low cost hire from Mountain Radio Services who have depots in many centres. For more information visit [www.mountainradio.co.nz](http://www.mountainradio.co.nz)

A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is a small, emergency distress beacon that emits a radio signal when activated. Search and Rescue teams use the signal to ‘find’ the beacon and enabling a more specific location to be established. They can be purchased from many outdoors retailers and can be hired from some DoC visitor centres. It is recommended that they only be activated in life threatening situations.

“The use of such communication devices like Mountain Radios and PLB’s in an emergency can greatly increase the chance of survival and reduce the time taken by search teams to reach people in distress” added Mr Owens.

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council also encourages the use of The Outdoor Safety Code for anyone planning to participate in any land based outdoor activity

### **The Outdoor Safety Code**

- **Plan your trip**

Seek local knowledge, plan the route you will take and the amount of time you can reasonably expect it to take

- **Tell someone**

Tell someone your plans and leave a date for when to raise the alarm if you haven't returned. Complete an intentions form and leave it with someone you trust.

- **Be aware of the weather**

New Zealand's weather can be highly unpredictable. Check the forecast and expect weather changes

- **Know your limits**

Challenge yourself within your physical limits and experience

- **Take sufficient supplies**

Make sure you have enough food, equipment and emergency rations for the worst case scenario. Take an appropriate means of communication.

For further information about safety in the outdoors, courses and training, information on intentions forms or communication devices, please visit [www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz)

**Ends: 525 words**

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**ABOUT THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL**

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council was formed in 1965 in response to the increasing number of mountain, bush and firearms fatalities. Today, NZMSC is a national organisation responsible for safety in land based outdoor activities. We facilitate the setting of standards, offer training, distribute resources, lead public awareness campaigns and foster positive support in the community so that more people can discover and enjoy New Zealand's outdoors safely.

**[www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz)**