

7 December 2011

## TRAMPER DEATH IN MT RICHMOND FOREST PARK HIGHLIGHTS DANGERS OF RIVER CROSSING

The tragic death of an experienced trumper who drowned in the Mt Richmond Forest Park, highlights the need to take extreme caution when encountering rivers, especially on solo trips.

Drowning in New Zealand's back-country is an ever-present risk when travelling through un-bridged areas but being aware of the dangers, learning the appropriate bushcraft and river safety skills plus planning and preparing well, can help you have a safe and enjoyable experience.

"The dangers are greatly increased when heavy rainfall turns what was an ankle-deep stream into a raging torrent very quickly. Some rivers can also rise at great speed and with very little warning," says the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council's Bushcraft Programme Manager, Chris Owens.

"More often than not, water levels can also drop equally as quickly – so waiting, rather than crossing is often the best option and also allows a break for rest and sustenance. In severe cases it may be necessary to camp overnight night and wait for the river to drop," added Mr Owens.

**The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council recommends considering these three questions when facing a river crossing situation:**

1. **Should we cross?** If in doubt, stay out.
2. **Where do we cross?** The choice of the safest place to cross is vital. Try to view the river from a high bank. You may be able to see gravel spits or sandbanks just below the surface and get some idea of the depth and position of channels.
3. **How do we cross?** All river-crossing methods have their advantages and disadvantages and no method is absolutely safe, however the Mountain Safety Council recommends the mutual support method. The more people in the party, the more strength there is for crossing and for supporting anyone who slips or falls.

The Mountain Safety Council runs various courses across the country and also provides helpful resources, with the overall aim of people participating safely in land-based outdoor activity. A River Safety course, which covers river dynamics, river safety and river crossing methods, is available in many locations.

In addition to the specific river crossing advice, all trampers, hunters and outdoors adventurers should get familiar with New Zealand's Outdoor Safety Code and follow the five simple rules to help you plan and prepare for your outdoors activity.

### **The New Zealand Outdoor Safety Code**

#### **1. Plan your trip thoroughly**

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

#### **2. Tell someone**

Tell someone your plans VIA THE outdoors Intentions process and leave a date and time for when to raise the alarm if you haven't returned.

#### **3. Be aware of the weather**

New Zealand's weather can be highly unpredictable. Check the forecast and expect weather changes. Check track and hut conditions. Beware of rivers – if in doubt STAY OUT.

#### **4. Know your limits**

Challenge yourself within your physical limits and experience.

#### **5. Take sufficient supplies**

For more information please visit [www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz) or for more tips and advice or to complete your Outdoors Intentions please visit [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

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#### **Notes to Editor:**

**Click below to download a high quality PDF of the Outdoor Safety Code to accompany this story:**

<http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz/resources/posters.asp>

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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)