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FOUR DEATHS IN FOUR DAYS A SHOCKING START TO SUMMER

The deaths of four people in four days in the outdoors is a shocking start to the summer season says New Zealand Mountain Safety Council Chief Executive Darryl Carpenter.

On Friday, two female tourists, a 20-year-old woman from China and a 23-year-old woman from Malaysia, were killed after being swept down the Waiho river while walking at night near Franz Josef.

A Nelson retiree aged 63 from fell to his death while he and a group of two other trampers were negotiating difficult terrain in the Kahurangi National Park on Friday night.

On Tuesday night, Police recovered the body of a Richmond man and experienced trumper, believed to have drowned while attempting a river crossing in Mount Richmond Forest Park.

All four deaths have been referred to the coroner.

“We are saddened by these tragic deaths. They are a sombre reminder of the need to be thoroughly prepared when going into the outdoors and to take extreme caution - especially when crossing rivers,” says Mr Carpenter.

“Mountain Safety Council will be working with search and rescue agencies, NZ Police and the coronial enquiries to establish what happened and any lessons that can be learnt. We will ensure any outcomes are communicated to the outdoor community in New Zealand and international visitors.

“Anyone going into the outdoors needs to plan well, to be aware of the dangers and have the skills needed for a safe and enjoyable experience. Thorough preparation and careful decision-making is essential to keep people out of danger.

“We urge people to take responsibility for their own and others’ safety. We cannot overemphasise the importance of people following the Outdoor Safety Code. These five simple, easy-to-remember steps could well save your life and that of your travelling companions.

“As hosts, we have a particular responsibility to help visitors to our country understand and prepare for local conditions. Overseas visitors often participate in activities or encounter terrain and weather conditions that differ markedly from those they are used to.

“Taking responsibility for safety has never been easier with the launch of the AdventureSmart.org.nz website by leading outdoor organisations and government agencies earlier this year.

“Here, anyone can access safety information and planning support for a wide range of land, snow, water, boating and air activities at one online location.

“You can also complete the Outdoor Intentions process online. Telling someone your plans - and leaving a date and time for when to raise the alarm if you haven’t returned - is a simple and potentially life-saving step.

“Before going on a trip into the outdoors make sure you plan and prepare fully. Use the website AdventureSmart.org.nz. Seek advice from an experienced guide with local knowledge. Talk to Department of Conservation staff, your local Mountain Safety Council branch or tramping club.

“These holidays, we want people’s outdoor experience to be the best of memories, not the worst. Take care, plan well, act wisely and ensure a safe and enjoyable trip,” says Mr Carpenter.

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 or for more tips and advice or to complete your Outdoors Intentions please visit www.adventuresmart.org.nz

Ends 493 words

Notes to Editor:

Download a print quality copy of the Outdoor Safety Code from www.adventuresmart.org.nz/media or use the full text below.

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About the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (NZMSC) 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
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