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MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL URGES CAUTION IN THE OUTDOORS DURING SEVERE WEATHER PERIOD

Following the severe weather that is being experienced across the country, the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (MSC) strongly recommends that trampers, hunters and other back country enthusiasts carefully consider their choices before venturing into the outdoors.

Mountain Safety Council's Bushcraft Manager, Chris Owens says the continued heavy rain and floods, especially in the top of the South Island, could make outdoor conditions treacherous and of particular concern is people attempting to cross swollen streams and rivers.

"In light of the recent tragedies where trampers have died in river crossing situations, we strongly recommend people reconsider any planned trip into the outdoors, especially in the worst affected areas, until weather conditions have improved," said Mr Owens.

Streams and rivers are forecast to rise quickly with surface flooding and slips possible and even experienced outdoor enthusiasts can strike problems in the outdoors.

"You should never cross a flooded or fast-flowing river or stream. If in doubt, stay out," said Mr Owens.

"If you are already out, then the best plan when faced with poor or deteriorating conditions, or a swollen stream or river, is to wait it out until the weather or the water level improves. This means taking extra food, a communications device such as mountain radio or personal locator beacon and other equipment appropriate to the terrain and conditions.

Before heading out outdoors the Mountain Safety Council advises everyone to follow the 5 simple rules of *The Outdoor Safety Code*:

1. Plan your trip thoroughly

You can avoid many potential problems by simply 'planning' a route that uses bridges, wire cages or cablesways or use a recognised crossing place.

2. Tell someone

Tell someone your plans, where you are going and leave a date and time to raise the alarm if you haven't returned. An easy way to do this is via Outdoors Intentions at www.adventuresmart.org.nz

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

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

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

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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