

**7 April 2011**

## **HUNTER TRAGEDY SERVES AS A REMINDER TO FOLLOW THE FIREARMS SAFETY CODE**

Yesterday's tragic death of Taupo hunter, Roger Kirk, highlights the need for anyone in possession of a firearm to follow the seven basic rules of the Firearms Safety Code at all times, says the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council.

Hunters are reminded to 'treat every firearm as loaded' (Rule 1) and to 'load a firearm only when ready to fire' (Rule 3). It is recommended that a firearm is regularly checked, loaded only when you intend to use it and in an area where it can be safely discharged. If game gets away, put the round back in the magazine and close the bolt on the empty chamber.

Slips and falls can occur at any time and whether a hunter is deep in the bush, climbing a fence or obstacle or simply returning home, it is imperative to point the firearm in a safe direction (Rule 2), by controlling the direction of the muzzle. This is equally important whether you are hunting alone or in a party.

Mike Spray, Mountain Safety Council's Firearms and Hunter Training Programme Manager, recently published an article entitled '*Never Drop your Guard*' (NZ Hunter Magazine, Issue 21 March/April 2011) in which he researched non-intentional firearm deaths in New Zealand from the past ten years.

He concluded that of the 24 deaths analysed, all of them could have been avoided by following the seven basic rules of the Firearms Safety Code. Ten of these deaths (nearly 42%) were a result of having a firearm loaded when it should not have been loaded.

"There are very few non-intentional firearms incidents in New Zealand each year which lead to injury or death. However, when a tragedy such as this occurs and coincides with an increased number of hunters currently participating in this year's 'Roar', it is a timely reminder to follow the Firearms Safety Code at all times," said Mr Spray.

"To check a firearm is unloaded you need to sight the magazine and inside the chamber to ensure no rounds are present." added Mr Spray.

A copy of the Seven Basic Rules of the Firearms Safety Code can be downloaded from [www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz)

## The Seven Basic Rules of the Firearms Safety Code:

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 when you know 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.

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### **ABOUT THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL**

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (MSC) was formed in 1965 in response to the increasing number of mountain, bush and firearms fatalities. Today, MSC 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.

MSC's volunteer firearms instructors are approved by NZ Police to deliver firearm safety training and administer the Firearm Safety Test to new firearms licence applicants. MSC is also proactive in delivering key firearms safety messaging campaigns throughout New Zealand and produces publications including the 'Going Hunting' pamphlet.

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