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The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council: Gun Safety Training in Kindergartens

In response to the Dominion Post's front page story entitled 'Kindy kids get gun licences', the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (MSC) today welcomes any initiatives that reinforce the firearms safety message.

MSC is a leading authority for outdoor safety information and education and MSC's firearms instructors are approved by NZ Police to deliver firearm safety training and administer the Firearm Safety Test to all new firearms licence applicants throughout New Zealand.

'The issue of teaching children firearms safety can be an emotive issue for many people', says Mountain Safety Council, CEO Darryl Carpenter.

'We do not want to trivialise the dangers of firearms and the consequences of **not** following the seven basic rules of safe firearms handling. We do support informing children of what a firearm is, what it is designed for and how to be safe, in an appropriate manner in order to satisfy their natural curiosity', he added.

MSC acknowledges the benefit of intergenerational safety messaging – as long as the messages are appropriate and tailored for each developmental 'stage'. With regard to children, we recommend that education and parental involvement is encouraged.

Mountain Safety Council also recommends that an emphasis should be placed on knowing the difference between real and pretend guns. 'It is essential that children realise that real firearms are not playthings and must be treated with respect,' said Mr Carpenter.

Children should be taught not to touch a (real) firearm without an adult present and if they find a firearm to seek the assistance from an adult.

Adult firearm users/owners are reminded of their own responsibility to keep children safe, by adhering to all seven rules of the firearms safety code, especially Rule 6: Store firearms and ammunition safely.

The Seven Basic Rules of Safe Firearms Handling

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 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