

MEDIA RELEASE

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Autumn cold snap sparks ANZAC outdoor safety awareness message

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (MSC) recommends people heading outdoors this ANZAC weekend pay special attention to weather forecasts and ensure they are well prepared, following an April characterised by unsettled weather and a high number of outdoor incidents.

MSC Chief Executive Mike Daisley said even experienced outdoorspeople could be caught off-guard by changes in the weather, and the right equipment could make all the difference this ANZAC weekend.

“All too often, people get lost or injured in the outdoors. This can easily turn into an emergency due to weather changes and reduced daylight. Carrying a personal locator beacon on your person and leaving your intentions could save your life.

“Being prepared for the worst can avert disaster – and that doesn’t just mean taking warm clothes. Letting someone know where you’re going and when to expect you back is the first thing people should do before heading into the outdoors.

“Just this past weekend, a father and his three children became lost on a bush walk near Matamata. The man’s wife knew where they were going and when to expect them back and was able to raise the alarm when they hadn’t returned that evening. Rescuers then located the man and his children by sending a signal to his mobile phone and waiting for it to bounce back.”

However, Mr Daisley said people could not rely on mobile phone reception in the outdoors. Purchasing or renting another form of communication such as a mountain radio or satellite phone, or a personal locator beacon was wise, particularly for overnight or multi-day trips, which are common over ANZAC weekend. These devices provide an affordable safeguard that can greatly reduce search time for teams looking to locate people in distress.

Mr Daisley said people also needed to remember that New Zealand’s weather was notoriously unsettled, particularly at this time of year.

“People should plan for the weather to change – wear layers, take extra food and consider alternate routes, should the weather change your original plan.”

Mr Daisley encouraged people to check the temperature as well as the conditions before departure, as the temperature had gone as low as -2 degrees in some areas earlier this month. He said it was especially important for people venturing outdoors to look after each other in spells of cold weather, as early signs of hypothermia could be easy to overlook.

“When a person is becoming hypothermic, they will often insist they are okay, so it’s important to look out for each other. If someone’s shivering or feeling cold even when moving, this may mean they are at risk of hypothermia. Make sure you’ve got warm dry clothes on hand, and take enough high-energy food to keep everyone going.”

Mr Daisley suggested people visit the MSC website www.mountainsafety.org.nz for free safety tips and other resources to help plan their journey. This includes [information on the rental and usage of personal locator beacons and mountain radios](#), which can be hired for around \$15 dollars per day.

He said simple ways for people to increase their chances of rescue in case of an emergency included leaving their intentions with a trusted contact using the [Outdoors Intentions form](#) on www.AdventureSmart.org.nz, and applying the five simple rules of the Outdoor Safety Code – plan your trip, tell someone, be aware of the weather, know your limits and take sufficient supplies.

--ENDS--

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NOTES FOR JOURNALISTS:

The New Zealand Outdoor Safety Code:

1. Plan your trip

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 and complete written Outdoors Intentions BEFORE leaving on your trip. Use the free tools that make it easy on the www.adventuresmart.org.nz website. At the very least, tell a friend or family member where you are going and date and time 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. Take a Mountain Safety Council course.

5. Take sufficient supplies

Make sure you have enough food, clothing, equipment and emergency rations for the worst-case scenario. Take an appropriate means of communication such as a Mountain Radio or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) and know how to use them.

About the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (MSC) is a national organisation with a mandate from our member organisations to encourage safe participation in land-based outdoor activities.

www.mountainsafety.org.nz

www.avalanche.net.nz

www.adventuresmart.org.nz