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## **'DUCK HUNTER DEATH A TRAGEDY' SAYS MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL**

"The tragic death of a duck shooter on the opening day of the season is an absolute tragedy," says Mike Spray, Firearms and Hunter Training Programme Manager for the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council.

This death highlights the need for all duck shooters to comply with all of the 7 basic rules of firearms safety which form the Firearms Safety Code.

"Shooters must never point their gun at themselves or anyone else," says Mr Spray. "This is a fundamental safety rule. Guns must always be pointed in a safe direction," he added.

When using semi-automatic shotguns, as many duck shooters do, there can be a reliance on using the safety catch. Shooters should **never** rely on the safety catch alone and should always ensure the muzzle is pointed in a safe direction.

"As with many non-intentional incidents, this regrettable incident could have been avoided," says Mr Spray.

There are very few non-intentional duck shooting incidents each year in New Zealand which lead to injury or death. This is an indication that for the most part, shooters do follow the Firearms Safety Code during the duck shooting season. "Unfortunately on occasions when shooters drop their guard, the consequences can be absolutely tragic. All shooters need to stay alert at all times when handling firearms and take special care," said Mr Spray.

### **The Firearms Safety Code: 7 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.

The Mountain Safety Council is responsible for delivering firearms safety training on behalf of the New Zealand Police and undertakes preventative safety messaging campaigns throughout the year. More information on firearms and outdoor safety can be found on the Mountain Safety Council's website [www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.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.

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)**