



23 April 2014

## DUCK HUNTERS URGED TO CHECK THEIR FIRING ZONES

The Mountain Safety Council is urging all duck hunters to check their firing zones. With more than 30,000 licences expected to be issued, many are eagerly anticipating the opening day of the game bird season which starts on Saturday May 3.

Just like Christmas, opening day comes around at the same time every year allowing friends and whanau to get together and enjoy duck shooting traditions. But because a lot of shooting activity is condensed into the opening weekend and the first two weeks of the season, this often results in a spate of non-intentional firearms incidents.

Although there were no fatalities last year, it's no reason to be complacent about safety this year says the Mountain Safety Council's Firearms & Hunter Safety Programme Manager, Nicole McKee.

'All incidents can be avoided if firearms users maintain responsible shooting behaviours. That means following the seven basic rules of the Firearms Safety Code and using common sense,' said McKee.

The key reminder for duck hunters is to check your firing zone before you begin shooting for the day. Take note of where other maimais, boats, hunters, stock and dogs are located.

'With moving targets such as game birds in flight, it is imperative that you're aware of your field of fire as the pattern of shotgun pellets spreads as you move. Duck hunting parties need to set their firing zones and stick to their shooting boundaries to keep themselves and their mates safe,' added McKee.

Duck hunters should also be prepared for objects (including people and pets) which could suddenly and unexpectedly enter your firing zone. Do not take the shot if there is any possibility that your pellets could endanger others. For those enthusiasts that 'jump shoot' in the vicinity of dams and ponds, ensure that your firing zone is clear before you take any shots.

Maimais and shooting stands also pose a significant risk as often they are well within shot range of each other. Having more than one hunter and several firearms in the same maimai can also pose a risk so make sure firearms are unloaded and made safe when not in use. Don't overcrowd and keep shotguns out of the way so no one trips over them.

Lastly, the lead up to opening day sees an array of duck related events and promotions held across the country but it's disappointing that some people get caught up with the social aspect of the sport and forget that alcohol and firearms do not mix – EVER.

Resist the urge to load up on alcohol the night before as an early morning hangover can not only affect your aim but also your judgement. Contrary to popular belief, that tot of brandy to warm you up on a frosty morning can actually increase your chances of hypothermia.

'It's no problem to celebrate your successes or reminisce about your misses with a couple of drinks once the guns are all safely stored away,' said McKee. 'But if your mate has been drinking and picks up a gun, be a legend and stop them. Save the alcohol for basting your game bird!'

For more information about firearms and outdoor safety, please visit the Mountain Safety Council website  
[www.mountainsafety.org.nz/firearms](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/firearms)

## THE FIREARMS SAFETY CODE: 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 the magazine only when 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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#### NOTES FOR EDITOR:

- The game bird season is both duck and upland game seasons
- Opening morning this year is Saturday 3 May 2014 (always the first weekend in May) and the season continues through to mid-August for upland game dependant on regional regulation.
- The number of game bird licences issued in 2013 was just under 33,000 and that is not accounting for those hunting on private land

<b>Nicole McKee (available for comment/interview)</b>
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#### 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.

We facilitate the setting of standards, offer training and education opportunities, create and 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.

**Firearms Safety**

MSC has the sole mandate from Police to deliver firearms safety training and administer a test to every firearms licence applicant as part of Regulation 14 of the Arms Regulations Act 1992. More than 9000 applicants, in 147 locations receive this training from a network of more than 480 volunteer firearms instructors annually.

MSC also produces pamphlets, manuals and DVDs to promote firearms safety, collaborates with Iwi (Whakatūpato initiative), creates and supports key messaging to the public and actively collaborates across the sector in a bid to reduce non-intentional firearms incidents.

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