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## **MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL WARNS DUCK HUNTERS TO AVOID ALCOHOL WHEN SHOOTING**

The duck season starts on the first Saturday of May and forty thousand passionate duck shooters will head off to their maimais on ponds and lakes to enjoy this highlight of the shooting calendar.

During last year's duck shooting season, there were five reported non-intentional firearms incidents resulting in shotgun injuries which ranged from relatively minor to quite serious.

"All five of these incidents could have been avoided," said Mike Spray, Firearms and Hunter Training Program Manager for the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council.

"When handling firearms you must be able to think clearly," said Mr Spray. "Alcohol and some drugs, including prescribed medication can slow mental and physical reactions and must not be taken prior to or while shooting," he added.

Unfortunately each season some shooters choose to breach Rule 7 of the Firearms Safety Code which clearly states: Avoid alcohol or drugs when handling firearms. The warning from Mike Spray is quite clear "Alcohol and firearms do not mix, EVER. Also, never shoot with others that have been drinking or taking drugs. The risk of a tragic incident is just too high."

Mr Spray also highlighted the effect of fatigue in contributing to non intentional incidents and advised all shooters to be mindful of tiredness when handling firearms. "For many, a duck shooting trip is a social event. It is fine to have a drink or two when all the guns are stored away, but alcohol combined with late nights and early starts can seriously compromise safety so the message is "moderate the social activity and get plenty of sleep".

Remember, it's a myth that rum or brandy will keep you warm on a frosty morning. In fact alcohol will decrease your body temperature and increase the chance of hypothermia. It is extremely unsafe to mix alcohol or drugs with a firearm activity. If you do, you are a danger to yourself and to others.

### **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 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.

More information about firearms and outdoor safety can be found on the Mountain Safety Council 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)**