

18 December 2011

## **FOLLOW THE SEVEN BASIC RULES OF FIREARMS SAFETY AT ALL TIMES WHEN HANDLING FIREARMS**

The tragic death of a 23 year old who died whilst hunting rabbits on a property near Wanaka last night highlights the need for hunters to follow all parts of the seven basic rules of firearms safety says Mike Spray, Firearms and Hunter Training Programme Manager for the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council.

The victim was fatally shot by his hunting companion after becoming separated in the course of the hunt.

Mr Spray says, that leading into the holiday season this is a timely reminder for all hunters to refresh themselves with the seven basic rules firearms safety and apply each part of them at all times. All non-intentional firearms incidents could be avoided by following the simple rules.

“Extra care is required when spotlighting as the field of vision is limited to the beam of the spotlight only and target identification needs to be positively confirmed.

“There are very few non-intentional firearms 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.

“Unfortunately on occasions when hunters drop their guard, the consequences can be absolutely tragic. All hunters need to stay alert at all times when handling firearms and take special care in the dark,” added Mr Spray.

### **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 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.

**Ends: 435 words**

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**Notes to Editor:**

A full colour high quality poster image of the Firearms Safety Code is available from [www.adventuresmart.org.nz/media](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz/media)

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**ABOUT THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL (MSC)**

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council was formed in 1965 in response to the increasing number of mountain, bush and firearms fatalities. Today, MSC 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)