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Mountain Safety Council urges hunters to take extra care when 'spotlighting'

The spotlighting incident resulting in the injury of a 17-year-old hunter in Southland on Monday highlights the need for hunters to take extra care when shooting at night.

There have been three deaths and two injuries from spotlighting incidents involving deer hunters in the past two decades, suggesting that these are rare events.

However, Tracy Wakeford from the NZ Mountain Safety Council Firearms Programme emphasised that no deaths or injuries with firearms are acceptable and all are avoidable if firearms users follow the 7 basic rules of firearms safety.

'Spotlighting is a legitimate and legal means of hunting game animals and can be done safely providing hunters follow all of the 7 basic rules and of firearms safety at all times,' said Mrs Wakeford.

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.
- They should be out of the reach of children, out of view and in a secure room, rack or cabinet approved by a Police arms officer.
- Never leave firearms unattended.

7. AVOID ALCOHOL AND DRUGS WHEN HANDLING FIREARMS

- Good judgement is the key to safe use of firearms.

For further information regarding firearms safety, please visit www.mountainsafety.org.nz/firearms

Ends 361 words

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About the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council... not just Mountains!

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. Our outcome is 'more people participating safely in land-based outdoor activity'.

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