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**Media Release**  
For immediate release



## **LOWEST SIX MONTH DROWNING TOLL IN 20 YEARS**

Water Safety New Zealand today announced that there were 48 drowning deaths in the first six months of 2010, 1 January – 30 June.

This is the lowest toll in the last 20 years for that period, at the same point last year there had been 51 drowning deaths, the five year average for January – June (2005-2009) is 57.

“To record a figure lower than anything achieved in the last two decades is extremely positive” commented Matt Claridge, General Manager, Water Safety New Zealand.

While a reduction is to be celebrated Claridge qualifies his statement by pointing out that even if this level was to be maintained New Zealand would still not compare favourably on a per capita basis with other developed nations.

“Drowning continues to be the third highest cause of unintentional death in New Zealand. It is an issue that affects all New Zealand communities”

Statistics show that only the Gisborne, Taranaki and Tasman regions have not had a drowning incident this year. The Auckland and Waikato regions combined account for 40% of all drownings in 2010.

75% of all drownings during the period were male (36) which is a relatively steady trend year over year. Recreational drowning out number non-recreational by 4:1 which historically could be linked to greater participation by males in aquatic based activity but with female involvement rising is perhaps more attributable to females exhibiting more responsible attitudes and behaviour than their male counterparts.



Popular environments for recreation, beaches (12) and rivers (12) account for 50% of drownings for the period.

Perhaps the most notable statistic released shows a dramatic decrease in Maori drownings which have fallen from 13 to 7 for the comparable period last year. The five year average for 2005-2009 is 14.

Claridge concludes “The challenge now is to sustain these reductions through the balance of this year. Whether we will be celebrating a record low annual toll in January 2011 will very much depend upon people making the right choices when enjoying any water based activity. To be safe you must understand the environment, have the right equipment and at all times act responsibly.”

...Ends...

**For more information or interview contact:**

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