

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE MAY 5, 2010

**DROWNING CAUSES MORE THAN 25% OF INJURY DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD**

International task force announces new guidelines for open water safety

AUCKLAND – May 5, 2010 – Drowning is a major cause of injury death for all ages. According to the World Health Organization’s most recent World Report on Child Injury Prevention, approximately 28 percent of all unintentional injury deaths among children are due to drowning.

Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death [behind motor vehicle incidents] for the under-25 age group in New Zealand¹ and 37 children are hospitalized every year, on average, following a non-fatal drowning incident. Our drowning rate is the third highest [3.3 per 100 000] of the developed countries, a rate that is twice that of Australia [1.5 per 100 000].

In response to alarming statistics such as these, an international task force on open water drowning prevention – 18 drowning prevention experts from 12 countries – established guidelines for families and individuals recreating at any open water site.

“Water safety must be addressed with all families. Open water is a high risk area for drowning and we must remain vigilant in providing education and creating awareness of this ongoing issue,” says Linda Quan, MD, task force co-chair and emergency medicine physician at Seattle Children’s Hospital. “Areas of the country with rivers, beaches or lakes are especially vulnerable, but children can drown in just a few inches of water so everyone needs this information.”

The guidelines emphasize swimming and water safety survival skills for everyone and provide strategies for those who are responsible for children or other persons while recreating in open water.

”Families and individuals immigrate or travel internationally. We wanted to create a list of guidelines useful for both groups to use whenever they are around open water,” says Kevin Moran, PhD, task force co-chair, faculty member at the University of Auckland. The task force recommends keeping yourself and others safe by following these guidelines:

Keep Yourself Safe

- Learn swimming and water safety survival skills.
- Always swim with others.
- Obey all safety signs and warning flags.
- Never go in the water after drinking alcohol.
- Know how and when to use a life jacket.
- Swim in areas with lifeguards.
- Know the water and weather conditions before getting in the water.
- Always enter shallow and unknown water feet first.

Keep Children and Others Safe

- Help and encourage others, especially children, to learn swimming and water safety survival skills.
- Swim in areas with lifeguards.
- Set water safety rules.
- Always provide close and constant attention to children you are supervising in or near water.
- Know how and when to use life jackets, especially with children and weak swimmers.
- Learn first aid and CPR.
- Learn safe ways of rescuing others without putting yourself in danger.
- Obey all safety signs and warning flags.

With planning and care, everyone can enjoy their time around water. For more information on water safety and drowning prevention, please visit:

www.seattlechildrens.org/dp/

www.usa.safekids.org/

www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.htm

<http://www.ilsf.org/index.php?q=about/drowning.htm>

http://www.who.int/entity/violence_injury_prevention/child/injury/world_report/report/en/index.html

Task Force Co-chairs: L Quan (USA), K Moran (New Zealand), E Bennett (USA) Members: S Beerman (Canada), J Bierens (Netherlands), BC Brewster (USA), J Connelly (Ireland), N Farmer (Australia), R Franklin (Australia), P George (Australia), J Kania (Kenya), B Matthews (Australia), A Rahman (Bangladesh), R Stallman (Norway), T Stanley (New Zealand), D Szpilman (Brazil), RMK Tan (Singapore), M Tipton (UK); Secretariat: M Tansik (USA)

Notes to Editor

Water Safe Auckland is the leader for regional water safety coordination and education in the Auckland region, including water safety promotion and education delivery.

“We applaud these guidelines but also stress the importance of thinking skills going hand in hand with the physical skills of swimming and survival,” says Teresa Stanley, WaterSafe Auckland’s Business Manager and second New Zealand member of the International Task Force.

These messages will be the topic of discussion at WaterSafe Auckland’s Regional Water Safety Education and Drowning Prevention Forum² this month.

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1. Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee [CYMRC], 2009
 2. WaterSafe Auckland Regional Water Safety Education and Drowning Prevention Forum
9.15am-12.30pm
May 19, 2010
Marine Rescue Centre, Mechanics Bay, Auckland.