

INSURANCE WORTH TAKING

COASTGUARD'S IN-WATER SURVIVAL COURSE



More adult males drown in New Zealand than in any other developed country. How do we fix this?

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ith our two small children, my husband and I have sailed over 30,000 nautical miles across two oceans over the course of seven years. Invariably the question is asked: what about the safety of your children at sea?

And tempests and storms. And sometimes sea monsters. All of them fall into the category of perspective. I fear each of these in late night expectations of events in front of us, but *in situ* everything is always less intimidating. Other than, of course, the safety of our children.

When it comes to international statistics, children are at the highest risk of drowning incidents. The WHO Western Pacific Region states that children die more frequently from drowning than any other cause of death, a statistic supported by *The Global Report on Drowning* (2014) which shows that age is the major risk factor in drowning, with the highest risk to children between one and four years old. So, yes, there is good cause



LEFT AND RIGHT

Addressing our poor drowning statistics needs an attitude change among boaters, and plenty of water safety education for young and old alike.

to ask us about our safety measures and how we ensure the protection of our children at sea.

Here in New Zealand, however, it would be more relevant to ask about the risk to your husband heading out for an early morning paddle to Rangitoto or how scared you are when your teenage son heads out on a fishing trip with his mates on the Hauraki Gulf. Because when it comes to New Zealand statistics, it isn't children that represent the highest number of fatalities in New Zealand waters. It is confident, strong and able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45.

More adult males drown here per capita than any other developed country in the world, and the majority of these men are competent swimmers who are familiar with our weather and local waters. So, where's the gap, and what's driving these statistics?

Our City of Sails claims to have more boats per capita than anywhere else in the world, which suits a country surrounded by 16,000km of coastline, criss-crossed by 525,000km of river and peppered with 3,820 lakes. One in three New Zealanders is involved in recreational boating, with an estimated 960,000 recreational vessels, ranging from small kayaks to large sailing yachts, plying our waters every year.

With approximately one million New Zealanders spending time on small boats, it is also not surprising that we hold the world record in accidental death in the water. Results from WSNZ's 2018 *Attitudes & Behaviour Survey* show that drowning is the leading cause of recreational death in New Zealand, with 90 percent of the drowning happening to adult males. Strong, competent swimmers... how can this be?

Knowledge will help improve safety, prevent accidents, and provide you with the competence and confidence to deal with the unexpected.

Unfortunately, it is often happening over avoidable causes: 60% of boating fatalities could have been prevented by the use of a lifejacket; 58% could have been prevented by access to effective communication equipment; 47% could have been prevented by checking the weather forecast; and finally, numerous water fatalities could have been prevented by avoiding the omnipresent sin – alcohol abuse.

A disproportionately large number of deaths in New Zealand waters could have been avoided had people been aware of – and

feature

Water Safety

WORDS AND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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RIGHT AND BELOW
Lessons include adopting strategies for staying safe around a capsized boat.



For further information on the Coastguard survival course visit: www.boatingeducation.org.nz

prepared for – some of the key factors in boating accidents. How do we prepare? My recommendation is to take out ‘insurance’.

When it comes to water safety, this insurance comes in the form of education. Coastguard Boating Education is taking on this initiative by getting people involved in its In-Water Survival course which focuses on these four major causes of boating fatalities in New Zealand. The course is a great way to get you talking as a family about the things you need to be aware of to ensure your safety on the water, and to prepare you for some of the most common risks.

The six-hour course is broken up into two parts – classroom discussion and in-water practicum – and is suitable for the entire family. You will learn how to avoid high risk situations, what to do if you find yourself in a compromised circumstance and how to maximize your chance of survival. Yes, you will get wet. Yes, you will laugh. And yes, you will have fun.

The course has you involved in some of the scenarios that happen within a safe environment, so that you can experience a potential situation ahead of a catastrophe. For example, what do you do if your inflatable lifejacket half-inflates... in a panic, do you know how to blow it up by mouth?

What do you do if your boat flips and you have to pull yourselves out of the ocean... and what if the only ones on top of that overturned boat are children? In class, my son didn’t have the strength to pull his younger sister out of the water. How do we prepare for this?

Consider the temperatures of New Zealand water... what would you do if you had to wait for support in sub-thermal water? Do you know the best strategies to use to keep warm? These are a few of the scenarios we ran through in the in-water session of the training, and these are some of the examples that have already claimed a life.

Water safety courses are much like insurance – you don’t need it until you need it. The key difference is that while insurance may save you money, water safety may save your life. The importance of having some form of survival training that assists you in making useful choices early on is key to your family’s safety, and the Coastguard offers you this foundation.

As stated in its training manual, “Knowledge will help improve safety, prevent accidents, and provide you with the competence and confidence to deal with the unexpected.” Get your insurance. Take the In-Water Survival course. Save a life. **BNZ**