

MEDIA RELEASE

Kaikohe, Thursday, 11 October 2007



A decade on... and still keeping our kids WaterSafe

In its 10th Anniversary year, the new season's WaterSafe Programme for Far North primary school children is about to get underway.

Administered by Sport Northland and sponsored since its inception by local electricity lines company, Top Energy the programme teaches Far North kids graduated learn-to-swim and personal survival skills. Top Energy's sponsorship also enables WaterSafe Instructors to train teachers and parent helpers as SwimSafe Instructors in participating schools.

Over the years, the WaterSafe Programme has enjoyed many highlights. In February 2005, it reached a giant milestone by celebrating its 50,000th lesson contact with Northland kids. In the same year, the national water safety body, Water Safety New Zealand honoured the programme and Top Energy with a national award.

Late last year, at the New Zealand Recreation Association's annual conference the WaterSafe Programme won 'The Most Outstanding Programme Award'. The NZRA Awards recognise and celebrate excellence in recreational programming, projects, facilities and honour outstanding individuals. Significant for the NZRA Awards judges was the WaterSafe Programme's longevity and reach – specifically, the fact that tens of thousands of at risk Far North kids had received vital water safety instruction over many years, as a result of Top Energy's ongoing funding.

During last season, the WaterSafe Programme's Principal Instructors, Myra Larcombe, Renee Beckett, Ester Hone and Surf Safety Instructor, Mike Casey visited 179 schools in the region, covering North and South Hokianga, the Bay of Islands, and the Far North. They delivered 9,230 student lessons, with 413 teachers and adults in attendance.

Says Top Energy Chief Executive, Roger de Bray, "We're delighted to renew our WaterSafe Programme sponsorship for a tenth year. Of course it's gratifying the programme has been nationally recognised and awarded, but locally we get a real sense that it continues to make a

difference in our community. We're also aware of the high regard our school principals, teachers and parents have for the SwimSafe Programme and we want to see the programme continue. It really is special."

THE PROGRAMME:

The Top Energy WaterSafe Programme teaches kids graduated learn-to-swim and personal survival skills and is designed to allow them to enter and advance through progressive swimming levels at their own pace. Top Energy's sponsorship also enables its Instructors to train teachers and parent helpers as Instructors in participating schools.

There are five separate components to the programme, which are:

- 1) Learn to swim & water survival instruction in school pools, using the nationally recognised 5-level Lotto SwimSafe sequential learning programme. Teachers have the opportunity to observe Instructors teaching swimming skills to various ability groups within their class.
- 2) A 6-hour Swim Safe Instructors training course for teachers, which includes practical pool sessions, principles of water safety and risk management, progressive methods of teaching strokes, effective skill teaching methods and swimming lesson planning. In addition, there is a 20-hour practical teaching requirement.
- 3) Assistance in planning and effective aquatic programme in school and/or teaching in-service.
- 4) Day at the beach, to learn how to be Beach Safe – learning about rips, currents, waves, SunSmart and then some fun activities on the beach.
- 5) A Non-swimmers 10-lesson programme which specifically targets those older primary school kids that have been identified by their schools as being unable to swim.

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