



29 October 2014

For Release on 1 November

**Drowning is preventable, never drive, ride, walk or play in floodwater**

**Cyclone season starts today; cyclone season accounts for 71 per cent of FIJI's annual drowning's.**

The outlook predictions from the Fiji Meteorological Service highlights that heavy rainstorms are expected over the coming months, causing periodic flooding of local rivers, high and dangerous surf conditions and flooding of low-lying villages.

Major cause of death during floods are people entering floodwater. This includes driving vehicles, river crossing, walking and children playing in floodwater.

"Floodwater is often deeper and faster flowing than it appears, full of hidden debris" said John Philp, Director Water Safety Council FIJI.

"Large volumes of fast flowing water can come and go very quickly, sucking in or trapping anyone who gets close to drains and pipes. These places are dangerous to play when flooding. They can be slippery, have strong pulling power and can be very hard to get out of" he said.

Last season's drowning's in the Western and Northern divisions showed that:

- 58 per cent occurred in rivers
- 54 per cent occurred in the afternoon's between 12 and 1700hr
- 75 per cent were male
- Mean and median age was 23 years
- 29 per cent of the victims were swimming
- 21 per cent were unsupervised
- 1:12 had CPR applied

According to the Fiji Meteorological Service, the country can expect two tropical cyclones within the Fiji group within the next six months – one is predicted to reach a category three.

Category three cyclones have very destructive winds, with tropics gusts measuring from 165 to 224 kilometres per hour. They are known to cause severe and extensive damages, causing the air to be filled with foam and spray; the ocean to be completely white with driving spray; visibility very seriously affected.

Water Safety Council FIJI (WSCF) would like to remind people travelling by boat to be mindful of weather forecasted during rainy weather conditions and to avoid travelling when heavy rain and strong wind warnings are in place.

Parents of young children should be supervised and not be allowed to use such volatile weather conditions as a playground for fun and enjoyment.

John Philp said "Drowning prevention is everyone's responsibility.

“We need to get serious about how we tackle drowning prevention in this country which is the central focus of WSCF”.

For updates on the weather forecasts, listen to the radio, turn on the news, get online and read the paper.

The Fiji Red Cross Society have readily facilitated the annual pre-cyclone briefings in the Northern and Western divisions. This helps to strengthen the disaster management network, refresh communities with disaster management responses and provided up-to-date information on what to do in disastrous situations.

The official 2014/2015 tropical cyclone season begins today, 1 November and ends on 30 April next year, with the peak period for cyclones in between January and March.

John Philp said “Fiji let’s work together to champion a lifestyle change in water safety measures through a collaborative, educational and research-driven approach on drowning prevention.”

KEEP WATCH  
DROWNING IS PREVENTABLE

---

END

**Media Contact**

**Water Safety Council (FIJI) Ltd**

Kathryn Murray

M: +679 999 7220

E: [kathryn@watersafety.org.fj](mailto:kathryn@watersafety.org.fj)