



PRESS RELEASE

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Tongariro Crossing demands respect

One of New Zealand's most experienced alpine guides is warning people to respect Mother Nature and the alpine crossings that demand respect throughout our beautiful country.

Stewart Barclay of the Tongariro-based Adrift Outdoor Adventures said a recent incident on the Tongariro Crossing this week show that people need to be prepared for undertaking the 19.4km walk, no matter what the weather conditions are when they set out.

The crossing veteran knows what he is talking about – with more than 2000 crossings under his belt, Mr Barclay said he has seen every condition the alpine environment can provide.

“When you get a good weather day, it can be great. It can be so beautiful and spectacular, even then, the weather can be so changeable at any time of the year and within moments it can be like the middle of winter,” Mr Barclay said.

“Guiding companies are there for a reason, particularly for first timers but even then, we have taken groups of experienced walkers who just want that extra peace of mind of having us with them.”

People who weren't professional guides but were in charge of taking others into the alpine environment needed to be aware of both the current weather conditions and possible changes, he said.

This week's incident where three students wandered away from their group and suffered severe hypothermia in freezing conditions highlighted how fast things can go awry. If it wasn't for a group of professional guides helping to find and rescue the boys, their fate could have been much worse.

“It isn't the first time we have seen an inexperienced group get into trouble,” he said.

“It is one of New Zealand's most picturesque spots, its stunning but the mountains demand respect and you must give it. People in charge of taking groups through the area need to be experienced. In the small chance that things do turn bad, that lack of experience creates issues and becomes a big deal, as we have seen this week.”

Visit Ruapehu Chief Executive Claire McKnight agrees that anyone visiting the popular tourism spot needed to vigilant of safety.

“Visitor safety is paramount. Ruapehu as a whole is a very outdoor focussed destination and the Tongariro Alpine Crossing is a big part of that. It's an experience that can be had year round and is a spectacular walk and it's important that visitors ensure they have ticked all their boxes safety-wise to ensure they prepared”

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For more information, please contact:

Stewart Barclay

P: 07 892 2751

M: 027 446 2374

stewart@adriftnz.co.nz

www.adriftnz.co.nz