

## **SAFETY TIPS FOR NEW ZEALAND**

Generally speaking New Zealand is a safe country. However, as in every human society, criminality and risks exist so here are some tips for you to follow so you are informed and your exchange can be a safe and happy experience for you.

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The best general advice AFS can recommend regarding issues of personal safety are:

- Get to know the New Zealand culture through asking questions and having discussions with your host family, your friends and the local AFS volunteers.
- Take seriously any concerns that your host family and school have expressed – listen to their advice.
- Do not ignore your own ‘instinct’ or feel you have to compromise your own personal behaviour, values or beliefs. These are valuable resources in making decisions about what to do in any situation.
- Do not feel forced into doing anything you know is wrong or may risk you continuing your AFS programme. If you are not sure ask your host family or your support person in your chapter.

**AFS NEW ZEALAND WISHES YOU A SAFE AND WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE IN NEW ZEALAND.**

## **PERSONAL SAFETY IN AND AROUND THE HOME**

Your host family will probably not know what you are concerned or worried about, so do not hesitate to ask questions about your safety.

### **General Safety Questions:**

- What should I do if an emergency occurs? Whom should I call?
- Where do I find emergency telephone numbers?
- What is the emergency number in New Zealand?
- What do I do in an earthquake?
- Do you have a first aid box? Where is it kept?
- Do you have a fire extinguisher? Where is it kept and how do you use it?
- What do I do if there is a fire?
- Do you lock your doors and windows when you go out and at night?
- Will I have a house key?
- Do you have a security system that I will need to know about?
- What do you advise me about answering the door when I am at home alone?
- How do I react when it is a stranger to the family at the door?
- Who should I call if I arrive home without a key and there is no-one home?
- Which neighbours could I go to?

### **Answering the Telephone**

If you feel uncertain about answering the phone because you have to speak in English ask your family what to say when answering the phone. Ask also, what information you should give, or not give.

### **Internet Usage**

Many New Zealand families have internet access which will usually be available for you to use. Ask your family about their rules for using the Internet.

Many New Zealand teenagers use social networking sites like Bebo or “blogs” (online journals) to keep in touch. Be very careful about giving out personal information on the Internet.

### **Electricity**

In New Zealand the voltage is 240v which is a high voltage. Do not use electrical appliances when close to water. Do not use a hair dryer while in the bath! This may result in a severe electric shock.

If you are cooking or using an electrical appliance, make sure to turn it off when you have finished using it. Leaving an electrical appliance or an element on could result in over heating and causing a fire.

There may be an electric blanket on your bed. Do not leave the electric blanket on while you are sleeping. Electric blankets are designed to be turned in the evening before you go to sleep to heat the bed. You should turn it off before you go to sleep otherwise the blanket may cause a fire.

New Zealand houses are usually quite cold compared to houses in your home country. You may need to sleep in warmer clothes than you are used to at home. Your host family may be able to provide you with extra bedding.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY OUTSIDE THE HOME**

Ask your host family about any situation in which you feel uncertain or frightened.

When you go on an outing with friends you should always tell your host parents:

- where you are going
- who you are going with
- what time you will return
- how you are getting there and back

Leave a phone number when possible. You must return home at the stated time.

The New Zealand Police force is friendly and helpful. If you are lost, ask for help from a police officer. In many places there are Community Police Officers who are there to help anyone at any time.

Ask your host family:

- Is it safe to walk around the neighbourhood after dark? Alone or with friends?
- How can I keep myself safe when alone, especially at night?
- Are there areas of the city or community where it is not safe for young people to be at night? During the day?
- What should I do if I get lost or separated from my friends? Whom should I ask for help? How do I use the public telephone?
- What are the laws and practices about crossing the street?
- Is it safe to carry money? If so, should I take any precautions?
- What should I do or where can I go if I do not feel safe?
- Is it generally safe to accept rides from friends and school acquaintances in their cars?

### **Cell Phones**

It is very common for New Zealand teenagers to have a personal cell phone. In fact, for safety reasons it would be good to have one. Most New Zealand teenagers communicate by text message instead of making a phone call because it is cheaper. Having a cell phone is not very expensive if you use it

wisely. Talk to your host family about cell phones – they may be able to advise you on the best deals.

### **Public Places**

Going to public places and walking around is usually very safe. As stated earlier check with your host family about areas you should avoid, they know best.

When visiting other areas of New Zealand always ask about the areas you can go to and the areas to avoid. Always let the family you are staying with know where you will be and ensure you have given them a telephone number where you can be contacted and make sure you have their telephone number also.

### **Weather**

New Zealand has a lot of mountains and bush areas for climbing and hiking. The weather can change very quickly in these areas. Always check the weather forecast before planning a walk into these areas, ensure you have adequate clothing, a cell phone if possible and never go into these areas alone. It is best to be accompanied by someone local who knows the area well.

### **Weapons**

New Zealand has very strict gun laws. All guns have to be registered with the Police. Our Police Force do not carry guns when on regular duty.

### **School**

New Zealand schools are generally friendly and supportive to foreign students. However if you need to talk to someone, the school counsellor is usually available to give advice and support. Many schools also have a teacher who is responsible for the AFS students. It is important that you find out which people in your school will give you support if it is needed.

**Smoking and drinking alcohol is forbidden at school.**

## **Theft**

Be careful not to leave your wallet, money or other valuables unobserved in school. It is wise to be careful. The best thing is not to take things of great value to school at all.

Do not wear jewellery to school, most schools in New Zealand do not want their students wearing jewellery as it is not part of the school uniform. Ask your host family and school mates about the situation in your school.

## **Risky Sports**

Risky sports cannot be undertaken within the AFS Programme without a sports waiver for the particular activity signed by your natural parents.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Bus and Train**

The larger city areas of New Zealand have a variety of public transportation ranging from train to your own bicycle. Public transportation is usually safe but if you are in a city area check with your host family about the safety of using trains and buses late at night.

### **Taxis**

You may find that taxis are more expensive in New Zealand than in your home country so it is probably not the most economical way to travel. If you find yourself in a situation where a taxi is your only option of transport, ask your host family which taxi company is the most reliable in your area.

### **Walking**

Walking outside the home is usually safe, however, there might be areas that you should avoid, especially at night. Ask your host family for advice about this.

When walking alone late at night, walk in streets that are well lit and that have people walking in them.

In New Zealand, cars drive on the left side of the road. If this is different to your home country, be especially careful when crossing the road.

### **Riding your Bicycle**

It is illegal in New Zealand to ride a bike without a safety helmet so if you have a bicycle to ride make sure you also have a safety helmet to wear.

Ask your host family about this. Also make sure that if you are riding your bike at night that you can be easily seen by other vehicles. You can buy clothes that have reflective panels on them or get a light for your bike.

### **Rural Areas**

There are things to be aware of in the rural areas of New Zealand. The roads may be narrow and you may need to stop when you are walking or riding a bike to let other vehicles through.

If your Host Family lives on a farm, you will need to talk to them about safety rules for any of the equipment before you touch anything. Some things you may not be allowed to touch. It is very important that you understand the safety procedures as soon as possible to prevent any possible injuries or damaging of equipment.

### **Cars and Hitch-hiking**

Ask your host family about who you are able to be with in a car. In New Zealand there are three levels of driver's licences, each with their own set of rules.

- Drivers on their Learners Licence must be accompanied by a full licenced driver at all times.
- Drivers on their Restricted Licence are allowed to drive alone but are not allowed to take passengers.
- Drivers with their Full Licence are allowed to take passengers.

Do not get into someone's car you do not know.

**AFS PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO DRIVE CARS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**

**HITCH-HIKING IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN, IT IS VERY DANGEROUS.**

**PARTICIPANTS EITHER DRIVING OR HITCH-HIKING WILL BE DISMISSED FROM THE PROGRAMME AND MUST RETURN HOME IMMEDIATELY.**

## **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

### **Drugs**

The use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes is strictly forbidden. This includes party pills and herbal pills, regardless of whether you are old enough to buy them.

YOU WILL BE SENT HOME IMMEDIATELY if you are caught taking or in possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia (equipment for taking drugs). You need to be careful about who your friends are because if they were to use or be caught with drugs you could find yourself being under suspicion for associating with them.

Ask your host family about the new drugs that are presenting in New Zealand now and about the risk of having your drink ‘spiked’ which is becoming more common. If you are at a party make sure you have your glass or bottle with you all of the time – don’t put it down where you lose sight of it.

### **Alcohol**

The legal drinking age is 18 years. However, you may find yourself in situations where students are drinking. Although drinking alcohol is not specifically against AFS rules, practices and sanctions differ from one community to another and from one host family to another. Drinking in a private home may not be a serious offence, but if underage students are caught drinking in a bar or public place they may be arrested by the police. Students using false ID to get into a bar or night club will be in serious trouble if caught.

AFS is aware that there are New Zealand high school students who abuse alcohol and binge drink. Binge drinking for females means four or more drinks on one occasion and for males it means five or more drinks on one occasion. Serious injury and death can occur from the abuse of alcohol. Binge drinking or inappropriate behaviour related to drinking is not allowed while on an AFS programme in New Zealand.

Talk to your host parents about their views on alcohol. Your host parents will expect you to follow the rules of their home.

Even if you do not drink alcohol you may find yourself at a party where others are drinking and you may feel uncomfortable. You may find that the person supposed to drive you home has been drinking and it is illegal to drive.

**DO NOT GET IN A CAR WITH A PERSON WHO HAS BEEN DRINKING.**

Before you go off to parties or social events you should discuss these questions with your host parents:

- How should you respond if other young people are pressuring you to have a drink and you do not want to?
- If you are uncomfortable at a party and want to leave early, but you are afraid of being a nuisance or being teased, what should you do? What excuses should you give?
- If you want to leave the party early, will your parents agree to come and pick you up? Can you take public transport? Can you call a taxi?
- If the person supposed to drive you home has been drinking too much alcohol, what should you do?

## **OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES**

### **Sexual Harassment**

Cultures differ in their views of appropriate sexual behaviour and practice. It is important to find out what is thought of as 'suitable behaviour'. You can gain this knowledge by looking, listening and asking questions.

Students may be unsure if they are being sexually harassed or if a particular person's behaviour would be considered normally friendly. Ask your host parents, your friends, your AFS Liaison Person or Support Person if you are having any difficulties with certain types of behaviour.

If you have any concerns about the way your host parents or siblings behave towards you, talk to your Support Co-ordinator, Intensive Programme Co-ordinator or your Liaison person.

### **Sexual Behaviour**

Each student has their own values and beliefs. In some societies young people are sexually active, there are also many who are not. Students should never compromise their own personal values and beliefs.

New Zealand AFS families can be conservative in their attitude to sexually active AFS students. Your host parents will be feeling very responsible for you, so it is important to be aware of their attitudes and expectations to avoid any misunderstandings.

New Zealand students may have pre-conceived ideas about students from other cultures. Your host parents may talk to you about your behaviour or the way you dress. It is wise to take notice of this information as you may be sending the wrong messages to young New Zealand students.

### **Text/Internet Bullying**

Many New Zealanders use emails and text messages to keep in touch and organise social events. Because emails and text messages are not face to face, there are people who will abuse these methods of communication and use emails or text messages to intimidate, annoy or threaten other people.

To avoid this, make sure you only give your cell phone number or email address to people you know and trust. If you receive an email or a text message from an unknown address or number, do not reply. If you continue to receive text messages or emails that are threatening or inappropriate, tell your host family immediately. They will be able to help you.

More information on text/internet bullying can be found at these sites:

[www.telecom.co.nz/mobilebullying](http://www.telecom.co.nz/mobilebullying)

[www.vodafone.co.nz](http://www.vodafone.co.nz)

[www.netsafe.org.nz](http://www.netsafe.org.nz)

## **EMERGENCIES AND NATURAL DISASTERS**

### **Emergencies**

The number to dial in an emergency situation in New Zealand is **111**.

**This will get you through to FIRE/AMBULANCE/POLICE.**

Make sure you can give the address or location from where you are calling from, to the answer service, and a number where they can call you back.

Try to be calm and speak slowly and clearly when the operator answers your call.

You can dial **111** from any public telephone free or on a cell phone as well as from a normal phone.

### **Natural Disasters**

Though it is unlikely that a natural disaster will occur during your stay in New Zealand, it is very important that you are prepared if anything happens. Ask your host family what natural disasters are common in your area. Then ask for safety advice, in case they occur.

#### **Earthquakes:**

- **If you are outside** - move to an open area away from any buildings or anything that might fall on you.
- **If you are inside a building** - take shelter under tables, desks or in doorways. Cover your head with your arms, making sure to protect your neck.
- Stay away from windows, shelving, and large free standing furniture that might fall on you.
- When the earthquake is over, be aware that there may be aftershocks (smaller, less intense earthquakes a few minutes later).

#### **Tsunamis (Tidal Waves)**

- If you live in a coastal area, you may be at risk of a tsunami. Ask your Host Family how you will know if there is an official tsunami warning.
- Tsunamis can be caused by earthquakes, landslides or volcanic eruptions. If there is an earthquake and you live near water, be aware that a tsunami may occur.

- If you hear an official tsunami warning or detect signs of a tsunami, evacuate at once.
- Get to higher ground as far inland as possible.

### **Volcanic Eruptions:**

There are many volcanoes in New Zealand. Although the majority are not active, there are some which are. Ask your host parents if you live in an area where there are active volcanoes. They will be able to tell you what to do in the event of a volcanic eruption. Active volcanoes are monitored by scientists so you should receive warning if a volcanic eruption. If there is a volcanic eruption:

- Stay indoors and close all doors and windows.
- Breathe through face masks or a cloth to prevent breathing in volcanic dust.
- Listen to your radio for civil defence advice and instructions.

In all emergencies and natural disasters, it is extremely important to **STAY CALM**. Civil defence is there to help in any emergency. It is very important to follow all instructions given. If you are asked to evacuate, only take what you need with you.