

MEDIA STATEMENT

TO: All Media

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ATTENTION: News editors, Editor & PR Wires

MEC MCHUNU URGES FREIGHT INDUSTRY TO PRIORITISE ROAD SAFETY

DURBAN – KwaZulu Natal (KZN) MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Willies Mchunu, today called on the freight industry, mostly owners of truck logistics companies, to be active participants in the drive to ensure road safety.

Speaking at the opening of the annual Shongweni Truck Expo, Mchunu said recent horrific accidents including one which occurred off the M13/ Richmond roads, in Pinetown, involving a truck and four taxis, and claiming 24 lives, demanded more resolute, collaborative action by all stakeholders.

His address came a day after a successful roadblock on M13 staged as part of the re-launch of "*Operation Phezukwabo*", a multi-disciplinary law enforcement campaign focusing on heavy trucks and buses.

The roadblock blitz also marked the launch of the KZN chapter of the annual October Transport Month programme, aimed at highlighting road safety, road and transport infrastructure development, law enforcement and regulatory compliance.

He said at yesterday's roadblock, held on M13, truck drivers claimed that they skirted the N3 because of toll fees, which employers did not provide for.

During the roadblock, 518 cars were stopped for checking of the various defects. Of the total, 120 trucks were stopped and most of them were not supposed to be using the M13. In addition, 175 vehicles, 85 taxis, 3 buses and 135 bakkies were also inspected. Many of the defects included invalid licence discs, professional driver's licences and permits, worn out tyres, overloading, driving without wearing seatbelts.

In excess of 75 percent (about 25 million tons) of South African import and export goods move through KwaZulu Natal's Durban and Richardsbay ports. As a result, the N2 and N3 routes – especially the latter connecting KZN to Gauteng – have seen a marked increase in heavy-load trucks. The increased traffic has put enormous pressure on the road network, which now

requires more investment to rehabilitate, but are also contributing to increasing road crashes and fatalities.

An average of 17 000 heavy vehicles go through weighbridges of which 3 000 are typically overloaded, way above the legislated 46 000 kg weight.

“I acknowledge that most of you here are law abiding citizens and serious entrepreneurs. Your urgent task is to work with us to tackle the irresponsible behaviour of some of your colleagues,” said Mchunu.

He said among the measures the department was taking, was closing down testing stations, found to have infringed road traffic laws, and undermining roadworthiness. At least 10 testing stations have been shut down recently. The department has also introduced a Traffic Fine Tracking task team to clamp of repeat offenders.

“We will soon be serving “notices of intention” to suspend or cancel the registration of a number of vehicle examiners and vehicle testing stations as we intensify our drive to combat fraud and corruption in this area,” he said. Mchunu also urged the established industry players to develop new entrants from previously disadvantaged communities, which would create jobs and grow the country’s economy.

In addition he called on owners to stick to the law when they hired foreign drivers by respecting labour laws and ensuring that drivers had valid licences and appropriate training and experience.

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