



transport

Department:
Transport
Province of KwaZulu-Natal

MEDIA LIAISON AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

MEDIA STATEMENT

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MEC WILLIES MCHUNU CALLS FOR COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP OF RESPONSIBILITY ON ROAD SAFETY

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr. Willies Mchunu, has today called on all sectors of society to take full and collective responsibility for road safety.

Mchunu's clarion call comes as the province marks the full year since the horrific M-13 (Pinetown) accident happened and claimed the lives of 24 people. This accident counts amongst the most gruesome this province and country have experienced.

It occurred on the Thursday evening, of the 5th of September last year, when a heavy truck crashed into four minibus taxis and one light motor vehicle off Richmond Road in Pinetown.

Following the accident, MEC Mchunu ordered the introduction of new measures to restrict heavy trucks passing through M-13 (Fields Hill). In the immediate term, the following measures have been implemented as per the MEC's commitment:

- Reduction of the carrying capacity of trucks using the route from 25-tonnes to 16-tonnes;
- Extension of the restriction times from 06:30 to 08:00 – to – 06:00 to 09:00 in the morning on the eastbound carriageway, from Hillcrest to Pinetown;
- Introduction of the afternoon restriction hours of between 16:00 to 18:30 In both directions;
- Beefing up of daily law enforcement by the department's Road Traffic Inspectorate working with the Ethekewini Municipality metro police;
- Establishment of the permanent traffic monitoring stations on the M-13;
- Introduction of weigh-in-motion technology to determine the level of overloading on the M-13;
- Electronic surveillance and mass measuring – which is still in the process of implementation; and
- Restriction signboards have already been mounted from the N3-M13 off-ramp to Fields Hill in Pinetown.

In the long term, measures that the department is exploring include introducing Average Speed and Intelligent Enforcement. As well, they include working with the national government to fast-track the implementation of the rail-to-road strategy, part of the Strategic Infrastructure Projects, which will reduce the heavy truck traffic especially to and from the Durban port.

Following the implementation of these measures, the department has also started tracking the average daily truck volumes.

Since the implementation of the restrictive measures in the beginning of 2014, average daily truck volumes indicate that in February heavies going to Pinetown through M-13 hit just below 2000 compared to 1000 of those using N3.

In March there was a sharp increase with heavies rising to about 2800 on the M-13 versus 1700 on the N3. However, the daily traffic volumes have stabilised from May to August at approximately 1400 trucks passing through M-13 compared to below 1000 using the N3.

In terms of the accidents' reports, there is also a clear drop in crashes post the accident. For example, between October and December 2013, the number of crashes recorded were 113, and there were no fatalities. These were down from the comparable period in 2012 where crashes involving all vehicles were 186, with 3 fatalities and 12 seriously injured. In addition, with beefed up law enforcement, between January and June this year, there were a total 1187 charges for various violations.

MEC Mchunu said it was clear that the measures were having the desired, positive impact even though more work still needed to be done.

"As we mark the full year since the M-13/ Pinetown tragic accident, we wish to call on all citizens and sections of society – government, business, civil society organisations, the public transport industry, the trucking sector, and individual motorists – to take full responsibility for road safety. As we commemorate the lives of the 24 people we lost in that accident, the 11 people including nine maidens we lost in Nkwalini after Umkhosi woMhlanga, and many thousands more, it is absolutely critical that we change our mindset and commit to doing right. Taking responsibility means strictly observing all traffic rules, paying traffic fines, not drinking and driving, always fastening seatbelts, and indeed driving roadworthy and fully licensed vehicles," said Mchunu.

He added that it remained critical that laws became more punitive to those found to have violated traffic rules to effect the wide-ranging change of mindset in our country.

"We would like to see the prosecution process in the cases involving both M13 and R66 accidents fast-tracked so the affected families can have closure. We further call on operators or owners of trucks, buses, and other passenger-carrying vehicles, to ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy at all times, and their drivers have necessary, legal documents to be on the road. It is our considered view that people's safety should always come first and profits later," said Mchunu.

All citizens should play their part in the fight against the road carnage.

"We must together elevate road safety to an issue of national consciousness. It's about life and death, which means it is paramount. Our law enforcement teams will continue to be visible and conduct road blocks including this weekend along the R66/ R34 routes going to Nongoma where Umkhosi woMhlanga is taking place – and as a matter of course. We urge all members of the public to work with us by vigilantly playing their part to ensure the safety of all of us," added Mchunu.

Ends.

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