



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SA Weather Service Report | Another Snow in KZN over the next few days

Media and Public Statement by the MEC for Transport and Human Settlements, Siboniso Duma on the State of Readiness to ensure Road Safety

Media Briefing | Greyville Racecourse Conference Centre

26 September 2024

Good Morning, Members of the fourth estate.

We acknowledge all of you who have joined us this morning and those who are following us through digital platforms.

Following last weekend's heavy snowfall that resulted in thousands of motorists being trapped along N3 and other major routes, we have taken a decision to strengthen our road safety measures.

We therefore wish to announce that today marks the beginning of regular interactions with media practitioners and members of the public on matters of road safety.

We value the role of media practitioners as watchdogs of society. We also recognize your ability to educate, inform, raise awareness, and promote positive social change.

Yesterday, we interacted with SA Weather Services. They informed us that KwaZulu-Natal will be affected by snowfall from Monday into Tuesday. They have singled out the following areas that will be affected:

- Ladysmith,
- Underberg,
- Drakensberg,
- Giant Castle, and other high-ground areas

In addition, they emphasized that, in all likelihood, snowfall will stop on Tuesday but will be followed by rainfall in various parts of the province, including Durban and other coastline areas.

As the Department of Transport, we have internalized the fact that erratic weather patterns caused by Climate Change require agility, discipline, and dedication from all categories of staff in the Department.

We have all agreed that we must work collectively to Inspire Hope for a Better Future.

Last weekend, we witnessed our employees placing their skills at the disposal of the nation.

The President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa saluted them for working flat out, removing snow, and ensuring that disaster management teams had access to the motorists that were trapped.

State of Readiness and Interventions

We understand that SA Weather Services will still be updating their forecast. But we wish to announce that highly efficient and dedicated teams are now on standby.



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The Road Incident Management Systems (RIMS) led by SANRAL comprising of all key role players on the national, provincial, and municipal road networks is already harmonising one plan.

They are identifying areas where joint operations and coordination will be established - covering all notorious roads and areas identified in the past experiences.

The department's Road traffic Inspectorate is establishing a satellite centre on top of the Van Reenen Pass to ensure quick action and road closure to mitigate against people getting trapped in the snow.

This satellite will start operating this Saturday afternoon on a 12 hour shift.

In summary:-

1. Traffic officers: Road Safety and Traffic Inspectorate - They are already involved in the coordination of possible road closures and observation of major routes in consultation with N3 Toll Concession. The focus is on N3 between Harrismith, Tugela Toll, R617 between Kokstad and Underberg, N2 Ingeli and N3 Mooi-River, and others.
We wish to indicate that the team will also be responsible for escorting trucks and vehicles to ensure that there is no congestion on the road. However, members of the public and motorists are urged to reschedule or postpone their journeys in anticipation of any eventuality. Prevention is better than cure.
2. Drivers of Motor Graders: Transport Infrastructure Unit- Drivers of Motor Graders are currently being sharpened to respond with speed and a sense of urgency to remove any snow before having it accumulating on the road. More than 10 Graders will be stationed on identified routes to ensure that our response is faster.
3. We have 21 graders and we decided to ensure that all of them are on standby as part of strengthening our prevention measures.

Consultation with Key Stakeholders

We have already started engaging with key stakeholders to ensure that we all work together to avoid any crisis and ensure the safety of road users.

We have continuous engagements with road freight industry stakeholders such as operators - trucking companies – companies that are managing and supplying drivers.

The South African National Taxi Council and bus councils, bus and truck associations are key stakeholders as we strengthen our road safety measures.

We do not want to leave out port operators and the entire value chain of Fast-moving Consumer Goods.

Consideration of the Impact on the economy

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media, as we strive to ensure road safety through measures we have announced, we do understand the impact of climate change and severe weather patterns on our economy.



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Our economy is driven largely through the transport and logistics sectors based on the two major ports housed in the province, namely the Port of Richards Bay and the Port of Durban.

Both ports are economically strategic not only to the Province of KZN, but also to the national economy of South Africa since they are linked to the economic heartland of South Africa, Gauteng, via our road infrastructure.

The Port of Durban is also a transit point for cross border container traffic for our neighbouring countries—a Gateway to Southern Africa.

The Ports of Richards Bay and Durban are important contributors to international trade and a significant enabler for South Africa's and the Province's economic development.

We acknowledge the strategic role played by ports and their necessity to the logistics chain. In addition, we are aware that severe weather patterns affect transport costs and reduce the efficiency of our ports.

Therefore, all our interventions are based on this understanding.

Damage to our infrastructure due to snowfall

At this stage, we wish to turn our focus to the issue of damage to our road infrastructure as a result of the snow.

Most climatologists and weather experts agree that this province has never experienced a heavy snowfall.

We have assigned our engineers in consultation with SANRAL to look at the impact of the recent heavy snowfall on our road infrastructure and give us a report.

In the meantime, they have informed us that when water and ice seep into existing cracks on our roads and freeze, these cracks turn into large potholes.

As we have stated in the past, due to the changes in weather patterns and excessive rains in the province, our road infrastructure has deteriorated faster than anticipated, with potholes developing throughout the road.

Weeks ago, we announced that we have set aside R4 billion to maintain our road network, which includes rehabilitating and resealing our roads. In view of the ongoing severe weather patterns, it is clear that the goalpost keeps moving.

We have to strike a delicate balance between constructing new projects and maintaining the existing infrastructure. In our budget for 2024/2025, a total of R8,7 billion is set aside for transport infrastructure.

Over R3,7 billion is going into constructing new infrastructural projects (roads and bridges), while over R58 million has been set aside for infrastructure planning and design. Over R920 million has been allocated to support programmes within transport infrastructure.

We are highlighting these figures to underline our commitment to ensure that our road infrastructure is developed, maintained, and rehabilitated to support economic growth not only in KZN but also in several provinces and the whole country.



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We say, other provinces will succeed because KwaZulu-Natal played a part in their growth and success.

Modernisation and development of our Rail Network

Ladies and Gentlemen, truck congestion on N3 last weekend compels us to intensify our plans aimed at modernization and development of rail transport – both freight and passenger.

Working with the National Minister of Transport Barbra Creecy, PRASA and other main role-players, as KZN we believe that we must ensure that we deploy wagons to move cargo from road to rail, with a specific focus on certain goods, such as coal.

In addition, we want to improve rail services in the province so that it could serve as the backbone of public transport while at the same time recognizing the huge challenges currently facing commuter rail services in KwaZulu-Natal and throughout the country.

Our Agenda on Climate Change – Road and Human Settlements Infrastructure

As we conclude, we wish to announce our multi-sectoral approach to respond to the threats posed by Climate Change to our road and human settlements infrastructure.

1. Institutional capacity

We will work closely with SA Weather Services, institutions of higher learning, researchers, NGOs, road safety organizations, and other main role-players to build and strengthen institutional capacity and ensure synergies. We want to have trained and skilled agents of climate change to focus on road safety.

2. Education and public awareness

We will co-ordinate all KZN Stakeholders to cooperate and promote, develop, and ensure exchange of educational and public awareness material on climate change and its effects on road infrastructure and human settlements.

We have developed a clear plan on how to rollout educational and public awareness programme involving all communities, sectors of society, and all leaders irrespective of political affiliation.

We will work with traditional leaders, religious leaders and soon to be launched transport forums.

3. Disaster Management

We will continue to work with our Disaster Management Committee through COGTA. Our focus as the Department is on decentralizing early warning systems to reach all road users effectively and timely.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we commit to working collectively with all role-players including the media to sustain unprecedented efforts to ensure road safety.

Acting together, we must Inspire Hope for a Better Future.

I thank you