

Horrific Accident: Investigation uncovers the identity of the driver – a 37-year old Zimbabwean National, Mr N Mbedezi

Media and public statement by the MEC for Transport and Human Settlements, Siboniso Duma

07 January 2025

N3, Van Reenen Pass: We have started year 2025 on a somber note following a horrific accident involving a truck and a minibus last night.

As indicated yesterday evening and this morning, we have launched an investigation into the causes of this accident that has shocked the whole country.

A technical team led by the Head of the Department of Transport, Siboniso Mbhele, the Road Traffic Inspectorate and South African National Road Agency met with the South African Police Service under the leadership of Major General Gonya, the Cluster Commander of Thukela District.

Based on the initial stages of the investigation, we wish to report the following:-

1. A taxi affiliated to UNcedo Taxi Association was travelling from Qumbu in the Eastern Cape to Johannesburg;
2. There were 18 passengers, including the driver;
3. A total of 17 people were declared dead on the scene of the accident, not 18 as initially reported.
4. Only one (1) person survived.
5. The details of the deceased are as follows:-
 - a. Adults males: 7
 - b. Adult females: 3
 - c. Minors – boys: 3
 - d. Minors – girls: 4
 - e. Only surviving passenger – is a girl child.

I requested the HoD and the entire team to visit the brave little girl in hospital. We are comforted by the fact that she is recovering.

We thank health professionals for ensuring the provision of quality healthcare.

We wish to extend our deepest condolences to the families of the deceased.

At this stage, we wish to indicate that according to the owner of the minibus taxi, the families of the deceased have been identified and notified.

Arrangements are being made by the owner and UNcedo Taxi Association for family members to travel to Ladysmith to identify their loved ones.

Who was driving, carrying who or what?

There have been conflicting reports about the whereabouts and details of the truck driver.

We wish to report that according to our quick investigation, the truck driver is a foreign national Mr N Mbedezi, a 37-year-old from Zimbabwe.

At the time of the collision, it was raining heavily, dark and misty.

At about 20h32, on the N3 at Van Reenen's Pass, a collision took place between a truck (Supper Link with two trailers) with registration number HCP391L (horse) FZW587L, FZW604L (Trailer) and a Toyota Minibus with registration number KX06ZBGP.

- The truck belongs to Pangolin Logistics
- The minibus was towing a trailer (JWP564EC) with 18 passengers – the driver included.
- The truck had only one occupant—the driver. And the truck was carrying two sealed bins.
- The truck driver was driving from Johannesburg towards Durban in direction whilst the minibus taxi was traveling from Durban towards Johannesburg.
- At the time of the collision, the truck was driving in the fast lane on the South bound, whilst the minibus was driving in the fast lane on North bound.

What caused the horrific accident?

1. From the video footage obtained during this initial stage of the investigation, it is very clear that the minibus lost control and swerved toward the right oncoming traffic lane and collided with a truck head- on.
2. The cause of the minibus losing control is unknown at this stage, but we are strongly suspecting the following:
 - ☐ Heavy rainfall
 - ☐ Speed
 - ☐ Vehicle defect
 - ☐ Or driver negligence

The second phase of the investigation will focus on point number 2.

We wish to thank Lt General Mkhwanazi for ensuring that an experienced investigator supported by experienced detectives are assigned to execute the following crucial stages of the investigation.

We remain concerned about the fact that the driver of the trucking company contacted the owner of Pangolin Logistics before disappearing.

We are asking ourselves too many questions.

Who assisted him in disappearing from such a remote area and at night?

We also wish to report that a second accident involved a silver Renault Clio with two occupants who were driving from Durban.

They unfortunately drove over bodies of passengers who were flung out of the minibus taxi.

The two occupants were not injured.

Finally, we wish to salute our dedicated team from the Road Traffic Inspectorate, Emergency Rescue Services, and other key personnel that responded swiftly as part of the rescue and cleaning up operation.

Ends

Issued by the MEC for Transport and Human Settlements

Enquiries

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