



ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT KWAZULU-NATAL'S 2004/2005 FESTIVE SEASON ROAD SAFETY PLANS

- 1. We are now at the beginning of December which marks the start of the festive season. How have you been doing in terms of road deaths during January to December 2004, as compared to the same period for the past three years?**

During 2001 1403 people died on KZN's roads, 1 240 in 2002 and 1 581 in 2003. We have increased our efforts in order to reduce road deaths this year, and we are hopeful that the figure for this year will be reduced, when compared to previous years.

- 2. There are various causes of road crashes. What are these expressed in percentages?**

Our research has regularly shown that the role played by each of the three major factors involved in crashes can broadly be broken down as follows:

Driver factors: 80 – 90%

Vehicle factors: 10 – 30%

Road environment factors: 5 – 15%

- 3. Human error accounts for most of the accidents, and obviously these could be avoided. Can you analyse these?**

Human error is made up of the following key driver factors:

- Excessive speed or speed too fast for circumstances plays a role in approximately 30% of all crashes and about 50% in the case of commercial freight and public passenger vehicles.

Other driver factors, which to a greater or lesser degree contribute to crashes, include:

- Driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor and/or a drug having a narcotic effect. (Testing will be stepped up as accurate evidentiary technologies are introduced);
- Fatigue resulting from exceeding the maximum acceptable uninterrupted driving hours (regularly targeted by our communication campaigns, and currently under negotiation with the road freight and public passenger transport sectors in the context of regulation of professional driver working hours and conditions);
- Basic driver incompetence (driving without proper training, without a licence or with a forged or fraudulently issued licence).

Operator fitness factors include:

- (Over)loading of passengers and freight vehicles used for commercial purposes;
- Management of vehicles (maintenance, safety and quality assurance regimes) and drivers (qualifications, refresher training, medical fitness, fatigue etc.)

4. What is your view on mechanical faults?

Mechanical faults or vehicle fitness factors contribute to between 10 and 30% of road crashes, and include the following:

- Under-inflated tyres;
- Smooth or worn tyres or fitting the wrong types of tyres;
- Poor brakes;
- Faulty steering;
- Poor lights/vehicle visibility;
- Poor general maintenance of other vehicle parts such as the chassis, body, wheel alignment and shock absorbers.

5. Engineering is one of the components of your strategy. What is meant by this?

Engineering or road environment factors include:

- Poor maintenance of the road surface, resulting in potholes and poor ride quality;

- Poor maintenance of the road reserve and/or road verges - e.g. tall grass at junctions obscuring oncoming vehicles, broken fences allowing cattle and other domestic animals to stray onto roads, and poor maintenance of gravel shoulders;
- Inadequate signs and markings.

6. The prevailing circumstances are really out of your control. How do road users behave in these circumstances?

Excessive speed or speed too fast for circumstances plays a role in approximately 30% of all crashes and about 50% in the case of commercial freight and public passenger vehicles.

We continually drive home the simple message "Over speeding kills!"

We stick to the emphasis on the negative role of speed for very good reasons—and with the following specific emphases:

- The most important issue is undoubtedly *speeds which are too high for prevailing circumstances*. This applies to both national and local roads. It does not, however, invalidate the need to set speed limits. If you say that "speed is not the issue" - and one assumes that this means on national roads, not in built-up urban areas—where do you draw the line? 250 km/hr? An unrestricted *autobahn* approach to South African national roads? Our national road environment is characterised by sudden changes of width, surface quality, weather and visibility conditions, and is further complicated by the widespread presence of pedestrians and stray animals along both urban and rural roads. We must set limits that take proper account of this complexity, and of road-user fallibility (both drivers and pedestrians).
- International crash research over many years has led to a powerful consensus on the relationship between absolute speed (as well as speed too high for circumstances) and two other linked factors: driver information overload (leading to impaired decision-making capacity) and (compounding this) the reduction of available *reaction time* to allow for avoidance of a potential crash situation. Crashes almost always have to do with the *unexpected* (i.e. a sudden dramatic increase in the number of decision variables confronting the driver). In such cases (typically arising at intersections or along busy stretches of urban or national road) the driver's "reasonable" safety calculations, based on "normal" driving conditions, cease to apply. The equation is simple: greater speed, exponentially less available reaction time, more certainty of a crash, more devastating impact. ("The faster you go, the harder you hit.")
- Absolute speed, being a critical factor determining the likelihood of death and the severity of injuries sustained by occupants in single vehicle or multiple vehicle collisions, is of major concern to us: for all road users, but in particular for passengers

in public transport vehicles (buses, coaches and minibus taxis). The death and injury rates prevailing in these sectors are absolutely unacceptable; the passengers are entirely innocent parties; and the great majority of them are "captive" to these modes of transport, without access to alternative options. Their rights require special defence, in terms of speed limit enforcement, professional driver competence and vehicle fitness assurance.

- Speeding is in many instances also related to a mind-set and behaviour patterns that are selfish, aggressive and unconcerned with the safety of other road users. It is often closely connected with the other forms of moving violation that contribute to crashes. Changing these underlying psychological/cultural factors is therefore a critical long term need, particularly in the light of widespread negative driver attitudes that still reflect live elements of South Africa's violent, divided, highly individualised past.

7. You have approximately one million licensed drivers in KwaZulu-Natal. How do you monitor all these drivers, as it is obvious that you cannot employ one million traffic officers to look after each and every driver in the province?

The KwaZulu-Natal Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) together with Durban Metro Police and other local authority traffic departments currently have approximately 2 000 traffic officers in their employ. We also rely on state of the art electronic equipment to assist us in our enforcement activities.

96 newly qualified traffic officers will graduate on 15th December and will be deployed on our roads on 16th December. In January 2005, 50 student traffic officers will commence their basic training. Arresting people is not an answer. The answer is that everybody should take road safety as his/her responsibility which is why we have road safety education programmes. We must all live road safety.

8. We notice that you are seriously engaging religious leaders on road safety issues. Briefly explain this programme as to how it started, where it is now and future plans?

Religious denominations and organisations are a critical pillar of civil society, as they make a meaningful impact in shaping societal behaviour and attitudes.

The KZN Department of Transport believes that religious leaders must play a more active role in “spreading the gospel of road safety”, through reinforcing road safety messages, thereby contributing towards saving lives on our roads.

Hence, our interfaith road safety programme which started about two years ago. Religious leaders and their congregations from various religious faiths, come together to pray with officials from the Department of Transport, for divine intervention in our efforts to reduce deaths on our roads.

Representatives include faiths such as Christians, Jews, Nazareth, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and others, who have decided to join the Transport Department and unite in prayer, for a safe and accident free road environment.

Although, we all come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, our common aim, is to pray to almighty God to assist us in our efforts to reduce deaths on our roads, during the forthcoming festive season and beyond.

9. Pedestrians require special attention as more than 40% of fatalities on the road last festive season were pedestrians. What is your plan in this regard?

Of the 229 people killed on the province’s roads last year, 127 were pedestrians. In crashes involving pedestrians, jaywalking and walking under the influence of alcohol or drugs are the major contributory factors, being present in 40 to 50% of vehicle-pedestrian collisions in urban areas and in 30 to 40% in rural areas.

According to the National Road Traffic Act of 1989, it is illegal for pedestrians to be on a freeway. Enforcement focused on pedestrian behaviour contributing to collisions will be increased. Such enforcement will be carefully targeted as part of our broader approach to pedestrian safety, which also highlights continuous audits of hazardous locations, low cost engineering and signage upgrades, improved land use planning and sustained school and community education and participation programmes. We have acquired two buses that will be used to randomly patrol the N2 and N3 and pedestrians who are found on the freeway will be arrested and taken to the nearest police station.

Niyabonwa, which means “you are seen”, was launched on 4 November and is aimed at cutting pedestrian deaths in road accidents. Thousands of pedestrians die each year simply because they are not clearly visible to motorists. This campaign will address the safety of pedestrians by encouraging them to ensure that they are visible to motorists.

Our “Omela eKhaya” (Get thirsty at home) programme will target both pedestrians and drivers by encouraging them to drink at home. Tavern owners will take responsibility for their patrons by ensuring that they do not walk or drive home drunk. The owner will provide a sleep over place or a safe sober driver to drive drunk patrons home. The reason for this is simply that, people who are under the influence of alcohol are much safer right at their homes than anywhere else.

10. What does the 2004/2005 festive season road safety plan, as was launched by MEC Bheki Cele on Friday 19th November 2004 entail?

Historically the Christmas / New Year period in KwaZulu-Natal results in an influx of people from all over South Africa, as well as international tourists. Also, during this period migrant workers travel home, especially to KZN and the Eastern Cape to spend time with their families.

This influx of people results in increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Annually during this period, South Africa is faced with a number of road deaths, as a result of road crashes, many of which could have easily been avoided. This state of affairs is totally unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue.

Therefore, we are proud to announce that we have moved from “ZERO TOLERANCE 2 100% COMPLIANCE”, for all road traffic laws. Should there be anything less than 100% compliance, you can be rest assured that you will be caught and punished. In the case of offences such as drunk driving, there is also the possibility that your motor vehicle will be forfeited. We are also working closely with the department of justice and looking into imposing sentences of community service instead of allowing offenders to be let off the hook by merely paying fines. So make no mistake – just comply 100%. If you commit any traffic offence, you can be rest assured that you will be caught and punished.

The name of our “Omela Ngasekhaya” programme has also been changed to “Omela eKhaya”. The reason for this is simply that, people who are under the influence of alcohol are much safer right at their homes than anywhere else.

This programme will target both pedestrians and drivers by encouraging them to drink at home. Tavern owners will take responsibility for their patrons by ensuring that they do not walk or drive home drunk. The owner will provide a sleep over place or a safe sober driver to drive drunk patrons home.

During the festive season last year, 229 people died on KZN's roads, as compared to 254 in 2002. Over the years, an analysis of the causes of these crashes indicates that speed, alcohol, driver fatigue, reckless and negligent driving, un-roadworthy vehicles, pedestrian deaths and driver attitude require specific attention.

The primary objective of our Summer Holiday Road Safety Programme is to create a safe road environment and to curb the number of road crashes during the festive season, primarily through education and enforcement. There will be visible stringent and regular enforcement operations conducted by all our law enforcement officers all over the province.

We have also received 189 card verification devices, which will enable our enforcement officers to scan your driving licence on the side of the road, and verify all your particulars.

Our goal is to intensify high visibility patrols, increase law enforcement on critical offences, as well as ensure the integrated and coordinated efforts of all role-players. In order to achieve this, our departmental Holiday Planning Committee consulted broadly with all relevant stakeholders such as the KZN Coordinating Traffic Committee, SAPS, SANDF, Durban Metro Police, Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI), the national department of transport (NDOT), local and district municipalities, department of health, taxi associations, TOLCON, and other interest groups.

Operation Juggernaut commenced on 1 November and will end on 31 January 2005. This operation will target all unlicensed and un-roadworthy heavy motor vehicles, drivers without valid driving licences or PRDP's, as well as those driving under the influence of alcohol.

Our highly specialized Public Transport Enforcement Unit (PTEU – Operation Shanela) will be deployed on high accident frequency areas and will specifically deal with all public transport vehicles. Some of these areas are the R56 (Richmond road), R617 (Boston / Bulwer road), R34 (Richards Bay to Vryheid), R66 (Ulundi and Nongoma) as well as random pedestrian blitzes at various locations on the N2 and N3.

We want to warn both drivers and owners of public transport vehicles, especially the bus and taxi industry to take responsibility for the safety of their passengers. Just one bus or taxi crash can result in many deaths and several injuries. You have been warned – we will show no mercy to any driver or owner who breaks the law.

Road side courts will be operational at Cato Ridge, Umdhloti, Park Rynie and Ladysmith in order to ensure that instant justice/punishment is meted out to offending road users.

For the first time this year, Road Safety Councils have been included in our planning sessions and have made a valuable contribution towards addressing certain road safety problems.

Motorists are encouraged to drive with their headlamps on dip during the entire period. All law enforcement officers must lead by example. Last year's campaign encouraging motorists to drive with their lights on had successfully cut road deaths. If you are seen, you are more likely to be safe and being visible is entirely your own responsibility.

11. What will be your word of caution to drivers, pedestrians and the general public?

I am sure that you will agree that we have gone all out to ensure your safety on our roads this festive season. I want to reiterate that we will show no mercy to any person who blatantly disregards the law and we will ensure that they receive the punishment they deserve.

Obey all road rules. "Road Safety is Everybody's Responsibility", and I want to encourage each and every one of you to do your part and save a life this festive season.

One death on our roads, is one too many. Call our Mpimpa Hotline on 086 221 10 10 – your voice can save lives!

On behalf of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport, I would like to wish you all the best during the festive season. Please be patient to other road users. Let us Arrive Alive in the 2005. "ASIPHEPHE"

CONTACT DETAILS:

- 1. Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) Radio Room: 0800 33 99 11**
- 2. Mpimpa Hotline – 086 221 10 10**
- 3. Emergency Medical and Rescue Services (EMRS) 10177 / 0800 00 5133**
- 4. Website: www.kzntransport.gov.za/home.htm**

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