

SPEECH NOTES FOR KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR. BHEKI CELE AT THE SUMMER HOLIDAY LAUNCH ON MONDAY, 04 DECEMBER 2006.

All Protocol Observed

- Road crashes and fatalities continue to pose a huge burden to our economy with a loss of R43 billion annually. According to statistics, road crashes are the second leading causes of death in the whole world among young people aged between 30 to 44 years. Needless to say, road accidents account for one of the major causes South Africa loses its fine talent in the arts and business sector in general who would have made a meaningful contribution towards the growth of our thriving nation. Road crashes of appalling horror occur almost every day. We all know about it and we all also know that we need a greater sense of responsibility as nobody benefits from this situation.
- According to the Road Traffic Management Corporation, every year in South Africa around 14 000 people die and close to 150 000 people are injured in road traffic accidents . On average, 67, 5 % of drivers, 33, 3% of front seat passengers and 93, 2% backseat passengers do not wear seatbelts.
- While it is though seatbelts may occasionally contribute to serious injury or death to no wrong concept, nearly all safety experts agree that buckling up dramatically increases your chances of surviving an accident. Seat belt use is essential on every journey, no matter how short or how slow - and it is vital for everyone in a car – especially kids.
- The Automobile Association (AA) also emphasises that it is not just about wearing seat belts in the front of the car. Rear seat belts also save lives and can reduce the risk of death for a front seat car occupant by about 50 percent.
- With the December holidays upon us, the costs for police and emergency services, damage to vehicles and property, and lost output can cost the country an estimated R12 billion per annum. It is for this reason that we are appealing to road users to fully accept responsibility for their behaviour and that of their families and friends to reduce the number of deaths on the road.

- In our endeavour to provide a safe environment which will be advantageous to the community and our visitors during the Summer Holidays, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport together with all relevant stakeholders will again ensure a safe and trouble free utilisation of all public facilities and roads within our provincial road network.
- Summer Holiday is period when we intensify our road safety initiatives as a result of increased traffic volumes. Historically, the festive period is always preceded by an influx of visitors from all parts of South Africa, including international and domestic holidaymakers.
- During this period migrant workers also travel home especially to KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape to spend the holidays with their families. The influx of people results in increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The province of KwaZulu-Natal is annually faced with high numbers of fatalities resulting from road carnages during the summer holidays.
- Our mission as the department will be to intensify high visibility patrols, increased law enforcement on critical offences, as well as the integrated and co-ordinated efforts of all role players concerned. Planned activities would revolve around national, provincial, local authority and community priorities.
- All law enforcement agencies and emergency services will be working in unison to ensure our 100 % Compliance Policy against traffic offenders in an effort to curb the number of road crashes and to create maximum impact in terms of law enforcement.
- During 2005, KwaZulu-Natal recorded 16% increase in fatal crashes and a 23% increase in fatalities in comparison with previous years. Pedestrians and overtaking related crashes featured predominately – however during the first 9 months of 2006 from January to September the number of fatal crashes in the country increased by 504(5,81%) from 8,678 over the same 9-month period in 2005 to 9,182 in 2006. During the same period the number of fatalities increased by 857(8,17%) from 10,481 in 2005 to 11,337 in 2006. KwaZulu-Natal recorded a decrease in fatal crashes by 158(8,55%) from 1,848 in 2005 to 1,690 in 2006 and a decrease in fatalities by 126(5,86%) from 2,152 in 2005 to 2,026 in 2006.
- An analysis of the causes of these crashes also indicates that speeding, drunken driving; driver fatigue, reckless and negligent driving, un-roadworthy vehicles, overtaking and dangerous pedestrian activity require specific attention.

- There will be no mercy shown to all traffic offenders during this festive season. All personnel will be made available during this period to ensure support for intensified law enforcement initiatives and they have been given strict instructions to penalise all those who do not comply with traffic rules.
- I am indeed pleased that we have purchased 4 more state of art high speed pursuit Turbo charged Audi's to be used in specific areas such as Park Rynie, P.M.Burg, Ladysmith and Vryheid for high speed pursuit for those who disregard traffic laws and hope to get away with their high-powered vehicles. Those days are gone!
- Key elements of our 2006/7 Summer Holiday Road Safety Plan include:

Road Blocks

- To ensure a safer KwaZulu-Natal and protection of our very life, multi-disciplinary, multi-jurisdictional roadblocks will be set up in support of Asiphephe. These multi-disciplinary road blocks will be a regular feature on our roads, with daily roadblocks having been scheduled to target specific areas at specific times.
- The purpose of these major roadblocks will be clearly to demonstrate to the public at large, that all law enforcement agencies and security services are united against recklessness, irresponsible behaviour and dangerous drivers.
- The operations will further show that we are determined to jointly tackle the problem of un-roadworthy, unlicensed motor vehicles, overloaded vehicles and unlicensed drivers.
- Sting operations will be carried out with roving road blocks within targeted areas, and Static roadblocks will be more prominent at Toll Plazas and entrances to City Centres and residential areas, and will be conducted at times when most road crashes occur, after 20h00 and over weekends.

N3 Safe Highway Project

- Visible policing will be highlighted during patrols by all enforcement agencies, by switching on their Blue Lights to reinforce police presence between Gauteng and Durban. Tolcon vehicles which operate on the N3 from Cedara in KZN to Heidelberg in Gauteng will also patrol with their Amber Flashing Lights.

Visible Policing

- All visible policing and traffic control will be increased in anticipation of high traffic counts, large gatherings. Special attention will be given to days and times identified as critical.
- Specific patrols will be carried out along routes used by public transport to transport migrant workers home in parts of Northern KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Buses and Taxis will be stopped and both the driver and the vehicle will undergo a fitness test and checked for correct certification, as well as non-wearing of seatbelts.
- Public Transport Enforcement Unit (PTEU) will be deployed to problematic areas that are affected by both public transport service problems as well as road crashes.

Alcohol Operations

- Alcohol abuse by drivers is usually associated with this time of the year and as a counter measure all drivers stopped will be screened for alcohol thereby limiting their chances of going undetected. Since the 01st December 2006, 54 motorists have been arrested for drinking and driving.
(37 arrested in PM Burg CBD) and
(13 in Pinetown).
- The Booze Bus will be used at every opportunity especially at roadblocks and randomly during road side checks. The Booze Bus will also be used as part of High Visibility Policing Strategy to create awareness and to act as a deterrent for would be drunken drivers.
- Alcohol is a major contributor to road crashes, every effort will be made through education by the Road Safety Directorate to discourage motorists from driving after drinking and for this reason, the target audience for this project will be people partying at hotels, restaurants, taverns and clubs.
- Once more, I would like to say if you planning on drinking, Omela ekhaya or make use of the Designated Driver Programme. Please stay at home and drink at the comfort of your sofas, not on our roads.

Speed Operations

- Special speed operations will be carried out in an effort to arrest chronic homicidal speedsters who travel at high speeds hoping to avoid detection on the N2 and N3 especially at Estcourt, Ladysmith, Park Rynie and Vryheid to Melmoth along the R34.
- Speed camera operations at fixed sites will be operational 24 hours. Other speed operations will be effected in the early hours of the morning when opportunity exists for drivers to speed when there are reduced traffic volumes. A special focus on speed will also be carried within Municipal areas where pedestrian fatalities are high.
- Our Mpimpa Call Centre will be fully operational 20 hours a day over the holiday period to ensure that emergencies reported to the Call Centre are immediately communicated to the relevant emergency services for response.

Mpimpa call Centre – 086 221 1010

- Also Help Centres will be set up on the N3 at Bergville & Balgowan as well as at the N11 in Newcastle.

Road Safety Beach Festival

- Our Road Safety Directorate in conjunction with other stakeholders will host a major awareness campaign at the Ethekwini beach front. Road safety messages will be spread to holidaymakers on the beach.

Furthermore, our Summer Holiday Operational Plan will include:

- (Seatbelt Campaign) as per the Road Traffic Management Corporations Rolling Enforcement Plan. 10, 000 drivers and passengers will be checked for non wearing of seatbelts
- Keep Left Pass Right Campaign
- Lights on campaign to encourage all vehicles to drive with headlamps on in support of the National Road Safety Campaign
- Not displaying front/rear registration plates
- Operation “Tata” targeting pedestrian enforcement by arresting pedestrians for being on foot on Freeways

- Operation Khipa S’Khoteni – aimed at freight transport vehicles where late night speed enforcement will be conducted.
- In closing, I would like to say a few words regarding Van Reenen’s Pass. The speed limit in the slow lane will be reduced from 80 down to 60km/hour and I am indeed pleased that from the 13 of December 2006, there will be demarcated lane with restrictions on the steepest 7km section of the pass, effectively ensuring a dedicated truck lane supported by our newest fixed camera site on the pass.
- No vehicle with a gross mass of more than 16 tons will be allowed to travel on either north bound or southbound in the fast lane of this section.
- Furthermore, I would like to appeal for driver attitudes and behaviour to change particularly on difficult terrain such as Van Reenen’s Pass. Basic issues such as speed limits, wearing of seatbelt, taking adequate rest breaks, observing safe following distance and so on, must be adhered to in order to reduce crashes and fatalities on our roads. Together, we must continue to strive to increase respect for human life, and treat road safety with the seriousness it deserves.

I thank you.