



**SPEECH NOTES BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,  
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIASON MR BHEKI CELE DURING THE DRIVER  
OF THE YEAR COMPETITION ON SUNDAY, 26 AUGUST 2007.**

**Protocol observed**

- A study on the vehicles involved in fatal crashes in 2004 revealed that heavy motor vehicles (trucks) contributed to 6.56% of road traffic fatalities in South Africa. This figure may not seem high but the fact of the matter is that the Department says: 'One death is one too many.'
- The citizens of our country are worried and deeply shocked by the recent spate of crashes involving public transport and heavy vehicles.
- Speed, drinking and driving, fatigue, unsafe overtaking, ignoring of traffic signals and other traffic signs, general reckless, inconsiderate, negligent and aggressive driver behavior, pedestrian carelessness and unsafe crossing of roads, drinking and walking, tyre bursts, poor vehicle maintenance, brake failure, poor lighting, unsafe following distances – all these are some of the main causes of accidents.

- This situation is totally unacceptable, and it cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged. Enough is enough. I therefore hope that programmes such as the Driver of the Year Competition will enhance the driving skills, competence and safety consciousness of heavy motor vehicle drivers.
- In order to combat this continued daily carnage on our road and street network, our enforcement agencies are in full force with operations like “Thath’Iskorokoro”, to deal with unroadworthy buses.
- My Department also ensures that weighbridges are maintained up to standard. The permissible dimensions and masses of vehicles operating on public roads are limited by the Road Traffic Act and Regulations for road safety and investment purposes.
- However, under special circumstances it is necessary to accommodate vehicles or loads that are practically unable to comply with the provisions of the Road Traffic Act and Regulations.
- In such cases the Act empowers road authorities to issue exemption permits under strictly controlled conditions in terms of guidelines set out. I am saying this because overloading is causing a huge damage on our road infrastructure. It is costing the government over R4 million per kilometer to construct tarred road.

- I take this opportunity and thank all the participants. The competition serves as an incentive for the business sector to invest in advanced driver-training for the drivers of heavy duty vehicles. Skilled drivers contribute to saving of human lives and reduction of vehicle maintenance costs, including fleet management.
- I am glad also that this competition has a special category of female bus driver even though it still does not exclude women from competing with men in the other categories.
- But I want to emphasize that this competition also needs to focus on educating drivers about human relations and tolerance on the road. We really need to improve our conduct on the road.
- We need to do away with the perception that South African drivers are bad drivers and show that we can be good drivers who are sensitive to road safety.
- In conclusion, I urge you as drivers in KZN, to always support government in its efforts to decrease road accidents. Please drive safely as you travel back home. Use our Mpimpa hotline 086 221 1010 to report incidents on the road. Drive safely if you are a long-distant driver because a healthy driver means that there is a healthy nation. An unhealthy driver poses a potential road risk.

**I thank you**

