

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR
TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, Hon. Willies
Mchunu AT THE SUMMER HOLIDAY ROAD SAFETY LAUNCH
HELD AT NSELENI ON TUESDAY,**

08 DECEMBER 2009.

Programme Director;
Minister of Transport, Honourable Sbusiso Ndebele, (MP);
Members of the KwaZulu-Natal Executive Council present;
Members of the Provincial Legislature present;
Mayors;
Councillors;
AmaKhosi AseNdlunkulu
Heads of various State Departments
Roads Safety Councils
Rural Transport Fora
Roads Safety Ambassadors
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me extend a special word of gratitude to Manzankosi for being with us today. I am particularly happy because he is a pioneer in the matters of road safety and transport. A son of this province, we welcome you warmly in your home province.

Programme Director; allow me, to thank all of you for attending today's Summer Holiday Road Safety Launch. This week officially heralds the start of the festive season. Everyone is now gearing up to celebrate Christmas and the start of the New Year.

On Friday schools will close their doors for the year and workers are preparing to officially down tools without being on strike, but, to relax and spend time with the loved ones.

85% OF ROAD ACCIDENTS ARE CAUSED BY HUMAN ERROR

Unfortunately, for our province, it means increased traffic volumes, and road carnage. A period of happiness is turned into a nightmare for some families. It is indeed sad that some 85% of road accidents are caused by human error – meaning a driver or pedestrian disregarding at least one traffic law.

To illustrate, let me share with you some of the documented transgressions committed by motorists in just two days only.

In only two days – 01st to 2nd December - the KwaZulu-Natal Road Traffic Inspectorate stopped 7144 vehicles on our provincial roads.

They have charged a total of 1238 drivers with various offences excluding speed camera enforcements. The total number of speed enforcements, including camera enforcements, netted 155 vehicles. At least 30 vehicles were found to be unroadworthy and removed from the road. Sadly, 18 drivers were found to driving under the influence of alcohol. Some 89 persons were driving without a valid driver's license. At least 72 vehicles were on the road without valid licenses. Fifth eight drivers were bust for not using seat belts. Four were charged for inconsiderate driving. (RTI ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS: 1st DECEMBER 2009 TO 2nd DECEMBER 2009)

Meanwhile, the Pietermaritzburg RTI has processed 175 cases of drunk driving for the month of November alone at our new state-of-the-art Alcohol Evidence Centre. In the first week of December 55 people have already been caught drunk driving.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2009 STRATEGY “*Alufakwa KwaZulu-Natal Lubuya Nesaphula-mthetho*”.

Programme Director, it is therefore clear to us that the biggest problem we face on our roads is caused by persons who have no regard for their lives and that of others. It is a result of this realization that our Road Safety Strategy centres primarily on Aggressive Law Enforcement. We are saying – *Alufakwa KwaZulu-Natal Lubuya Nesaphula-mthetho*.

As part of our co-ordinated law enforcement, every traffic officer in the province will be on active duty, to police our entire road network. An Area Wide, Aggressive Road Enforcement (AWARE) Program of Action will be implemented over this period with the special focus on:

- Drinking and driving
- Speed enforcement
- Seat belt enforcement
- Moving violations
- Public passenger transportation
- Pedestrian enforcement

MEC FOR TRANSPORT TO REVOKE THE DRIVERS’ LICENSES

Statistics show that we have an extraordinary crisis on our roads. The major contributors to this crisis are speeding and drunk driving. To deal firmly with these twin evils, I have formed a Technical Committee to look into various pieces of legislation with a view to allowing the MEC for Transport to revoke the drivers’ licenses of the serial law breakers who are responsible for wantonly maiming and murdering our people

Our aim is to ensure public safety through administrative action that revokes one’s driver’s license immediately. The revocation process shall run parallel to the judicial one of prosecuting the driver for breaking the traffic rules. This revocation

process will help to temporarily, if not permanently, remove the erratic drivers from our roads quickly while the wheel of justice grinds towards a conviction. We do not want to wait for the judicial process while the offender continues with his wayward behaviour on the road.

Our attempt at the license revocation is not a new phenomenon. It has been found elsewhere to reduce fatalities significantly. According to the study published in the August 2007 in the issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research* that looked at data from 46 US States. This study is considered the most comprehensive studies on the impact of drunk-driving laws in the U.S. The study found that the revocation process reduces drunken driving fatalities by 5%, which translates to at least 800 lives being spared in the U.S. per year.

Alexander Wagenaar, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Florida's College of Medicine and the lead author of the study, says that revoking a drunk driver's license right away works better than waiting until after a conviction, which can take up to a year in some States.

It is simple timing: if you do something wrong, you should suffer the consequences immediately. It's a basic behaviour-curbing tenet called negative reinforcement that works on rats in the lab and just as well on humans.

As government we must ensure that breaking traffic laws is a big deal. Drivers must be made to worry about their erratic driving behaviour more than they do now. If we have a law that allows a motorist whose failure to obey traffic rules, and his/her vehicle kills an innocent person, but such a driver is given a fine only – then we need to relook at such a law. We refuse to allow lawlessness to continue to rob people their lives and cost our economy dearly.

FATALITIES STILL TOO HIGH DESPITE A DROP

Although we have made significant progress in achieving a lower fatality rate, road deaths, serious injuries and economic losses from motor vehicle crashes are still

too high. During the festive season last year, 290 people died, compared to 353 who were killed during the 2007/08 summer holiday period. While we welcomed the reduction, it still means that 290 people died. When one considers the trauma suffered by the families of these 290 people, especially during Christmas time, this reduction is, but, a pirate victory.

We need to go all out to ensure that there is a further reduction this year and that fewer families, if any, have to endure such extreme grief and trauma. We will continue our zero tolerance approach for traffic offences and ensure that those who endanger the lives of other road users receive no mercy.

DRINK DRIVE AND BE CAUGHT

KwaZulu-Natal has gained a reputation for its tough approach to drinking and driving. This year we are pleased to have had SAB partnering with us to save lives by setting up a new Alcohol Evidential Testing Centre in Pietermaritzburg. The Centre is equipped with relevant tools including Dräger Alcotest breathalysers and a closed-circuit television network to monitor the testing process.

The breathalyser machines are able to take an instant and accurate reading of the amount of alcohol in an individual's bloodstream which can be used as evidence to secure a conviction for drunk driving. If you're over the limit, you will be arrested on the spot, charged and locked up until you are taken to court.

As I said earlier the Alcohol Evidence Centre has already processed 175 cases of drunk driving for the month of November and 55 in the first week December alone.

TECHNOLOGY TO ASSIST ENFORCEMENT

The planning for this period is also based on the deployment of resources in recognition of particular areas of high risk and deviant driver behaviour and has taken into account black spots. Extensive use will be made of technology to assist enforcement and these include:

- Mobile brake tester roller (MBRT)
- Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR)
- Average speed over distance (ASD)
- Remote communications (REMCOM)

Night patrols have been introduced along the major corridors to detect deviant driver behaviour and risky overtaking. Special operations group will target long distance coaches and mini-bus taxis to ensure safe passage of passengers. Inter-provincial cross border operations will take place to curb inter-provincial crime. Areas targeted will be N3 Van Reenen Pass and N11 KZN/Mpumalanga Border.

SIYABAKHUMBULA

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport has for sometime now ran programs that encourage public participation and public empowerment in road safety campaigns. The objective of these programs is to allow the public to openly voice their support for programs that crack down on road crime.

Siyabakhumbula is one of these programs and is used as an intense communication strategy designed to heighten public awareness concerning the non-accidental nature of most road collisions and their associated costs. This campaign focuses on remembering those who died on our roads.

The campaign looks beyond statistics on our road carnage, but, to the human face of those who have to deal with the trauma both at the site of collisions and in the families left behind. It is a highly personal campaign that allows people to share their grief.

WITHS THANKS TO INTER-FAITH LEADERSHIP

The fact that we work as government and diverse religious faiths is a confirmation of our belief that our efforts as government will be incomplete if they exclude

religious leaders, considering more than 65% of the people of this country identify themselves with some sort of religious belief system. Road Safety has become a moral challenge.

Religious denominations and organisations are a critical pillar of civil society, as they make a meaningful impact in shaping societal behaviour and attitudes. Therefore, I want to thank all religious leaders from various all faiths for giving their full support to the Road Safety Awareness Campaigns we are conducting.

I request that we use our churches, mosques, temples and every other place of worship to preach to our fellow worshipers about the observance of road rules. It is not fair that we need to spend millions of rands on public awareness campaigns and the taxpayer be saddled with this huge bill of paying for the rich to be reminded of the rule of the road such as “Wear your seatbelts”.

AVOID SPECIAL RESORT COURTESY OF GOVERNMENT

I encourage road users during this festive season over to ensure that they have designated drivers – so as to avoid wasting their bonuses or spending an unexpected holiday at a special resort courtesy of the Departments of Transport (RTI) South African Police Service, and the Department Correctional Services.

I appeal to everyone who gets behind the wheel during this festive season to make a concerted effort to obey the traffic laws. And, to support our effort aimed at reducing road fatalities. Finally, on behalf of the entire ANC-led Government, I wish all the people of KwaZulu-Natal and our visitors’ a special season filled with joy. Drive Safe and Stay Alive. It is not only the right thing to do – failure means Uyisaphula-Mthetho. Alufakwa KwaZulu-Natal Lubuya NesaPhula-Mthetho.