

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, HON. WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE EASTER HOLIDAY ROAD SAFETY LAUNCH HELD AT TSHELIMNYAMA – PINETOWN:

20 April 2011.

Programme Director;
AmaKhosi AseNdlunkulu present;
Members of the Provincial Legislature present;
Ethekwini Mayor;
Councillors;
Law enforcement personnel;
Officials of various government departments;
Road Safety Ambassadors;
All our stakeholders;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Programme Director, allow me to thank all of you for attending today's official Easter Holiday Road Safety Launch. This week heralds the start of the Easter holidays. People are preparing to take short holidays, migrant workers will go home to their families and Christians will be travelling to various places of worship.

Unfortunately, for our province, all this means increased traffic volumes, and a potential of road carnage. Sadly, this is also a time when religious and family celebrations are turned into nightmares for some families.

To that end, we convey our deepest appreciation to all those men and women in uniform who always spend holiday periods working to keep us all safe.

We thank these unsung heroes like our enforcement officers, emergency services and health personnel. We thank you for making this sacrifice for the benefit of our safety.

This year's Easter period is unique in that it comes when, as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport, we have just hosted a Road Safety Summit. The summit was part of our consultation process that allows both the Department and its stakeholders to make informed decisions on how best to tackle the challenges our people face on our roads, especially those that compromise their safety.

That is why today's Easter road safety launch is regarded as part of a build-up to the broader road safety plans in accordance with the summit resolutions which were about curbing carnage on our roads.

Some of the resolutions that emerged from the summit were as follows:

- The youth must become champions of driver-behavior;
- Laws and enforcement strategies need to be harsh because perpetrators get light penalties;
- Government needs to lobby for the creation of traffic courts so that road offenders are dealt with amicably;
- The Department to design roads and bridges with safety in mind. For example, necessary signage, markings, speed humps, fence etc.;
- Intensify road safety education and campaigns around road safety within communities;
- There has to be synergy in the implementation of programs within all tiers of government;
- Monitor implementation of traffic laws;
- Recognition and training of traffic personnel;
- Develop anti-corruption strategy within the transport industry;
- Regulate and standardize driving and learning centers;
- Come up with vigorous pedestrian safety strategy.

But most importantly to you as the public, this period also comes when we have already dedicated this year to 'Activism Against Road Carnage and Transgressions'. This means that we want to galvanise individuals and the society at large to play a role in curbing carnage on our roads. We say that accidents do not happen but they are caused.

I therefore take this opportunity to personally invite each one of you to show your commitment to road safety by supporting this Easter campaign. We have decided to take this launch to you as the community because we want to form a partnership against road accidents with you during and beyond Easter holidays.

Our point of departure here is to give priority the concept of self-policing to ensure that road users take the responsibility for safer roads because road safety is everybody's business.

The outcome of our traffic law enforcement activities over the last two years (2008/09 to 2009/10) highlights the extent or magnitude of the seriousness and levels of impunity of our motorists on our roads. Motorists remain the prime culprits when it comes to disregarding road traffic rules.

The categories that have been regarded as contributory factors to collisions in KZN are speed, drink driving, vehicle defects and moving offences such as using cell-phones whilst driving, not wearing seatbelts and overloading.

Road accidents and road deaths in particular, have a far-reaching impact on victims. People who die on our roads are normally workers, learners, students and breadwinners. Most of these people are economically active members of society who contribute to the growth and development of this country.

Furthermore, road accidents cost the government billions of rands which could have been used to deliver services and improve the lives of the citizens of this country through developmental projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have invited each one of you to show your commitment to road safety by supporting our campaigns. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend all those who have partnered with us in road safety Public Private Partnership initiatives.

We are grateful for the support from SAB in providing the Alcohol Evidence Centres that have breathalyser machines which are able to take an instant and accurate reading of the amount of alcohol in an individual's bloodstream that are admissible in court as evidence to secure a conviction for drunk driving.

This morning we were opening our fourth Evidence Centre here at the Pinetown RTI. The other three centres are operating at Braid Street RTI in Pietermaritzburg, Umdloti RTI and Port Shepstone RTI. To date, more than 3 400 motorists have been arrested in the centres for drink driving.

We have also forged a new partnership with a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) known as South Africans Against Drunk Drivers (SADD) as well as Independent Newspapers.

Together we launched the 'Name and Shame' campaign which has seen Isolezwe and The Daily News publishing the names of offenders who have been to court due to drunk driving.

This partnership is to encourage public participation in the fight against drinking and driving and to expose and humiliate offenders to the society at large. Through these partnerships, we are hoping to decrease the unacceptably high number of deaths and injuries caused by drivers who drink and drive.

Programme Director, as part of our plan, all traffic officers will be deployed over this period. Night patrols have been identified along the major corridors to detect deviant driver behaviour and risk-taking. The Department's Special Operations team will target long distance coaches and mini bus taxis to ensure the safety of passengers.

There will be several multi-disciplinary road blocks all around the province, together with the SAPS, local authority traffic agencies and other enforcement agencies that will target drunk driving, unroadworthy motor vehicles, overloading as well as crime in general.

To further strengthen our law enforcement resources, today we are handing over a fleet of seven new VW GTI golf's that will be assigned to RTI stations solely for the reduction of suicidal speeds and speeds in general on the province's roads.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the communities of Pinetown and Mariannhill in particular, for rallying behind Operation Hlasela. We all know that towards the end of last year, the Ethekewini Inner and Outer West area was in the limelight for crime incidents that were reported.

But the way you as communities have cooperated with government departments and the South African Police Force (SAPF) is very much appreciated. Over the December/January holidays last year, we stationed our special police task team in this area of Tshelimnyama and your cooperation there was noted and appreciated. We thank you for that.

You have shown that it cannot be right that KwaZulu-Natal is always the worst province in the country when it comes spreading the HIV and AIDS pandemic that kills in numbers, we cannot be the ones that lead other countries because of high incidents of road carnage, taxi violence and other criminal activities. It cannot be that every year statistics put us on top of the list in the country.

Since the inception of democracy in South Africa in 1994, we have been the only province where by-elections results were questioned because voters were intimidated and assaulted. It is here where a person has been sentenced by the court of law for stealing marked ballot papers.

We therefore call upon all our communities in the province to come on board and ensure that we clean up our province. Let us continue to work and pray with unity of purpose and without ceasing for a safer South Africa, where the number of road accidents and incidents of crime will be significantly reduced.

I thank you