

**NOTES FOR SPEECH DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF KWAZULU-NATAL
MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR.
WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE AT BHONGWENI -
KOKSTAD ON THURSDAY, 11 AUGUST 2011**

Programme Director;
Members of the Provincial Legislature;
Sisonke District Mayor;
Greater Kokstad Municipality Mayor;
All Councilors present;
Religious leaders;
Leadership of the taxi industry;
Members of the media;
Members of the affected families;
Ladies and gentlemen;
All Protocol observed

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank the families of the deceased for allowing us as the Department of Transport and the Government of KwaZulu-Natal to organize this service in memory of our people who so tragically passed on at the weekend.

It is very unfortunate and saddening that just less than ten months ago we were here in Kokstad to mourn the loss of 19 people in an accident, which happened on R617. On that day of 28 October 2010, we took time speaking about the importance of responsible driving. But where are we today? We are gathered here again because of an accident that took the lives of 10 of our people on the same road.

It is also unfortunate that although our province KwaZulu-Natal is going the extra mile to ensure that all road users are safe, through the construction of roads that are user-friendly and intensifying road safety campaigns, but we continue to attend memorial services such as this one today.

In fact, these memorial services are an initiative of the KZN Department of Transport to intervene with assistance when five or more people die on our roads. We consult with the families to establish what assistance is required and then agree on whether we will hold a memorial service, usually on a Thursday, or a funeral service.

But I want to emphasize that memorial services such as this are just some examples of many road crashes that are claiming innocent lives every weekend on our roads throughout the country. Therefore, our intervention does not underestimate the devastating impact of fatalities involving less than five people. In fact, we have always said that “one death on our road is one too many.”

Now, how do we move forward together to respond to this challenge? The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport hosted a Road Safety Summit in March this year. The summit was part of our consultation process that allowed 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 challenges that compromise their safety.

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 currently perpetrators are penalized too lightly;
- Government needs to lobby for the creation of traffic courts so that road offenders are dealt with immediately;
- We need to intensify road safety education and campaigns around road safety within communities;
- There is a need to be more vigorous about regulating and standardizing services of driving and learning centers;

Subsequent to this, as the Government of KwaZulu-Natal we have launched an Integrated Traffic Law Enforcement Committee (ITLEC) that is working towards the attainment of the goal of preventing road crashes and offences that lead to fatalities in the province.

The major role players in this initiative are the Provincial Department of Transport, Ethekewini Metro Police and the various local authorities. This Committee will drive the integrated provincial traffic enforcement initiatives and programmes as well as engage in continuous research aimed at finding new ways to curb the high levels of road accidents and fatalities.

We want to see vigorous enforcement of traffic laws in all areas including the rural areas, townships and cities. This means that we do away with a trend that road safety campaigns are intensified around particular times of the year when traffic volumes are at their peak, like the festive season and Easter holidays. We want to ensure that we focus our attention on road safety 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

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 charged for culpable homicide and not murder or is given a fine only – then we need to relook at such a law. We refuse to allow lawlessness to continue to rob people of their lives and cost our economy dearly.

There are common factors which contribute to collisions in our country, including KZN, which unfortunately for us, has a reputation of killing more people than any other province, whether it is as a result of HIV and AIDS, crime or road crashes. The number one cause for road crashes is excessive speed, drunk driving, vehicles that are not worthy to be on the road as well as moving offences such as using a cell-phone whilst driving, not wearing seatbelts and overloading.

Now, to us as members of the public, it is important to mobilize ourselves as 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, and that preventing them from happening is a joint responsibility.

The Honourable Minister of Transport Dr S'bu Ndebele always says that "the living close the eyes of the dead, and the dead open the eyes of the living". Incidents like these open our eyes to the reality of death on our roads. That is why the Department would like to utilise this incident as a platform from which we can call upon each one of you to show your commitment to road safety by supporting our campaign.

Let us all agree that today we are making a commitment that will take us to the festive season and beyond. Whether you are a passenger or a driver, we must all take responsibility and respect one another on the road.

The accident that brings us together today happened at about 05h30 am on Saturday (06/08/2011) between Franklin and Swartberg, and involved a Toyota Quantum and a bus. It is alleged that the taxi driver was trying to make a U-turn when the two vehicles collided, killing nine people instantly. The 10th person died on her way to hospital.

The taxi driver has since been transferred to Edendale Hospital and is under police guard. Once he is discharged, he will then be charged with multiple counts of culpable homicide.

We would like to express our sincere condolences to all the bereaved families during this time of grief.

Name and Surname	6. Annie Swartling
1. Vuyiswa Ndeleni	7. Charmaine
2. Maleboahang Moso	8. Gean Stainbank
3. Matsidiso Moso	9. Paballo Makhshane
4. Lwanele Gula	10. Leonard Mathoka
5. Chantal Swartling	

May their souls rest in peace!

We wish those still in hospitals a speedy recovery.

The Department will assist the victims and affected families in following the correct procedures to claim from Road Accident Fund. This is done free of charge, but we want to stress that this is not to say we do not allow people to use their own lawyers if they wish to do so. We offer the service to those who have not hired lawyers to claim on their behalf.

I THANK YOU.