



**TRANSPORT MINISTRY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Remarks by Transport Minister Ms. Sindisiwe Chikunga Briefing the
Media on the Preliminary 2023/24 Festive Season Campaign Statistics
on 24 January 2024 at Grasmere, Gauteng**

MECs Present

Director General of the Department of Transport, Advocate James Mlawu

Deputy Director General for Roads at the Department of Transport, Mr
Christopher Hlabisa

Senior Managers and Other Officials of the Department of Transport

Representatives of Provincial and Local Governments

RTMC CEO Advocate Makhosini Msibi and RTMC Executives

CEOs and Executive Management of Transport Entities

Private Sector Stakeholders

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to extend a very warm word of welcome to all of you and thank you for attending this briefing where we will be releasing the preliminary festive season road safety statistics. However, although we refer to this information on road safety performance as 'statistics', we are talking about

breadwinners, professionals, mothers, fathers, and children who lost their lives needlessly on the roads largely due to in the main negligent behaviour.

These are actual human beings whose hopes, aspirations and ambitions were dashed. They include luminaries such as the talented playwright Dr Mbongeni Ngema, a Member of Parliament Ms. Alice Mthembu, two Newcastle-based medical doctors Dr Sondezi and Dr Mhlobo, a Limpopo Provincial Traffic Inspector Kedibone Railo who was knocked by a speeding motorist while on duty on the N1, as well as a young newlywed Pretty Matimba Mavundla who died seven days after getting married.

It is therefore befitting and appropriate on an occasion like this that we bow our heads and observe a moment of silence as a sign of respect to all those who have departed and to also pray for the speedy recovery of the injured.

As a Department, the Road Traffic Management Corporation and other role players charged with the task of promoting road safety in the country, we cannot rest on our laurels when thousands of people die on the roads leaving young children with trauma and permanent emotional and psychological scars.

The economic impact of road crashes, fatalities and injuries is counted in billions of rands, this places an enormous burden on health and social services.

Our long journey towards the attainment of the National Development Plan and the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety targets shows that we have made steady progress over the past five years.

Cumulative annual road fatalities have been continuously declining from the year to 2018 to the year 2022. The number of annual road deaths in the five-year period have decreased from 12 921 to 12 436.

The preliminary statistics we are releasing today tell only part of the story about road safety in the country, it is by no means a total story. The story that they tell on face value, is that road crashes over the festive season have almost levelled off when compared to last year.

However, when measured against the high number of registered vehicles in country at the start of the 2023/24 festive season compared to the 2022/23 festive season, the story becomes different. It becomes a story of progress achieved against extra-ordinary odds.

The 2023-2024 festive season period was marked by heavy rainfall and storms which created challenges on the road. Unfortunately, some drivers did not modify the speed in slippery and wet conditions, and that resulted in avoidable crashes. Others, as we saw in a few incidents in KwaZulu Natal, insisted on driving over flooded bridges resulting in tragedy when vehicles were washed away.

The number of registered vehicles at the start of this year's festive season campaign on December 1, 2023, stood at 13 133 035. This was significantly higher than the 12 964 430 registered on December 1, 2022 and thus bringing more 168 000 registered vehicles on to the road.

At the same time, we should note that the total number of driving licences issued stood at 15 343 067 in December 2023 compared to 14 897 925 in December 2022.

Furthermore, information from the toll concessionaires indicates that roads were extremely busy with traffic volumes reaching 853 564 at the peak of travelling on December 20 alone.

A closer examination of the crashes and fatalities over the 2023/24 festive period depicted the following trends:

- Most of the crashes occurred in the first week (December 01 to 07), the third week (December 15 to 21) and the fourth week (December 22 to 28). The first week incorporated the payday weekend when people had received bonuses and were having end of year parties.

The third week incorporated the long weekend, industry closure and the people started travelling. The fourth week incorporated the Christmas long weekend and it saw a massive increase in traffic volumes and festivities.

- Most crashes took place between 19H00 and 22H00 with the peak between 20H00 and 21H00.
- Most fatalities were recorded on Sundays which is a new trend.
- Human factors contributed 80,8% of the crashes, environmental factors contributed 10,4% as a result of heavy rainfall and storms that had a big impact on road use, and this is whereas vehicle factors contributed 8.8%.

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- 40.9% of those who died were pedestrians, passengers accounted for 33.6%, drivers 24.6% and cyclists 0.8%
- It will be noted very sadly that the majority of those who died were between the ages of 25 and 44.

Ladies and gentlemen, the number of fatal crashes experienced over the 2023/24 festive period is 1 184 which represent a 2,3 percent decline compared to 2022/23 festive season where 1 212 crashes were recorded.

This decline was made possible by the intensified law enforcement operations conducted and the high police visibility throughout the country. More than 1.4 million vehicles were stopped and checked in the period under review with 7 820 drivers arrested for among others driving under the influence of alcohol, inconsiderate and reckless driving, producing false documentation and excessive speeding.

The highest speed was recorded on N1 Settle Bridge in Limpopo where a driver was stopped and arrested for travelling at 225 kilometres an hour in a 120-kilometre zone.

A driver with the highest alcohol content was arrested on R409 in Butterworth in the Eastern Cape with the breath alcohol reading of 2.48 milligrams of alcohol per 1 000 millilitres of breath. This far exceeded the legal limit of 0.24mg alcohol per 1 000 ml of breath.

The top five traffic offences for which traffic fines were issued are speeding with 78 958 fines compared to 34 576 previously, driving without fastening

seatbelt with 27 552 fines compared to 29 769 previously, driving without a driving licence with 28 767 fines compared to 26 865 previously, driving an unlicensed vehicle by 34 896 motorists compared to 37 063 previously and driving vehicles with worn tyres with 17 335 fines issued compared to 13 671 previously.

As a consequence of our relentless law enforcement as well as education and awareness campaigns, the number of people who died on the roads was reduced by 25 (1.7 percent) from 1 452 in the previous reporting period to 1 427 in the current period. Five provinces, the Free State, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Limpopo, and North West recorded fewer fatalities while other provinces recorded increases.

The provincial breakdown of fatalities is as follows:

Free State recorded a 27.4 percent decline.

Eastern Cape recorded a 21.5 percent decline.

Northern Cape recorded a 15.7 percent decline.

Limpopo recorded an 8.4 percent decline.

North West recorded a 2.1 percent decline.

Gauteng recorded a 7.6 percent increase.

KwaZulu Natal recorded a 4.2 percent increase.

Mpumalanga recorded a 9.7 percent increase,

Western Cape recorded a 22.6 percent increase.

It is worth noting that the Eastern Cape is the only province that managed to surpass the target set for it to reduce fatalities by at least 18.6%. In the light of this, we will have to have serious engagements with authorities in the

provinces and possibly redefine the targets informed by objective dynamics and available resources on the ground in the provinces.

I wish to commend our traffic officers, members of the South African Police Services and emergency medical services for their sterling work, commitment, and dedication during this period. They sacrificed their family time and pleasure to as they committedly enforced the law and working hard to save lives.

This is true patriotism. It is this spirit that our founding father President Nelson Mandela referred to when he said: *“You will achieve more in this world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution.”*

We wish to implore the sector to fast track the implementation of the Traffic Law Enforcement Code to bring about harmony and standardisation in the traffic law enforcement sector. It is not correct that traffic officers in most provinces do not work on a 24/7 shift system, and we must pay overtime when we require them to work after hours to save lives.

This is not sustainable, and we will continue to have engagements with MECs and Trade Unions as social partners to ensure that we remove all obstacles that have so far made it difficult to implement the Code and all its provisions.

We cannot afford these delays when our people are dying in preventable circumstances on the roads.

We will also be engaging with the Police Prisons and Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) on their proposals to improve traffic law enforcement in the

country. We believe that their proposals may be of great assistance in reducing road crashes and saving lives.

Going forward, we will also implement the resolution on the road safety summit held in December 2023 which include among others improving road markings and demarcation for visibility in inclement weather conditions and to enhance vehicle sensors to read them.

In addition, we will work towards designing road safety messaging framework that shows alternatives to drinking and driving (namely promoting ridesharing and alternate drivers).

We have considered the introduction of compulsory in-service training on road safety for engineering graduates within municipalities as well as increasing investment on road safety research.

We will also need to have closer engagement with the Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal provinces as better resourced provinces to understand what needs to be done for them to improve their performance.

We should spare no effort in implementing initiatives that will make our roads safer for travel. We wish to thank all the stakeholders, especially Renault, Mahindra, Hollard, Santam and Aware.org for assisting in bolstering our efforts during the festive season.

We also realise that while valuable strides have been made, there is still a long journey ahead which will require partnerships, resource allocation, determination of targets and promotion of road safety research.

A sincere word of gratitude also goes to members of the media for ensuring that road safety messages reached as many people as possible in rural and urban areas and in different languages. Your contribution is invaluable.

I thank you all.