



STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, DR BLADE NZIMANDE, ON THE OCCASSION OF THE RELEASE OF THE 2018 PRELIMINARY EASTER ROAD SAFETY REPORT AT IMBIZO MEDIA CENTRE, GCIS, PARLIAMENT, CAPE TOWN

17 April 2018

Deputy Minister, Ms Sindisiwe Chikunga;

Mpumalanga MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, Mr Pat Ngomane;

Western Cape MEC for Transport and Public Works, Mr Donald Grant;

North West MEC for Public Works and Roads, Ms Johanna Maluleke;

RTMC Board Chairman, Mr Zola Majavu;

Members of the RTMC Board and other Boards present;

Acting Director General, Mr Mathabatha Mokonyama;

Deputy Director General for Roads, Mr Chris Hlabisa;

RTMC CEO, Advocate Makhosini Msibi;

CEOs of other Transport Entities;

Head of Departments;

Traffic Chiefs;

Officials from other spheres of government and Entities;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen

We have emerged from what was a very difficult period. This Easter period will go down in history as a period in which the champion of the poor Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela passed away.

Soon thereafter we experienced the passing away of Ambassador George Nene and former Minister Dr Zola Skweyiya. Indeed, April is an unkind month for those who fought for liberation because it is in this month that Chris Hani was gunned down, Solomon Mahlangu hanged and former ANC president Oliver Tambo lost his life.

We mention these tragic events because they involve the people who helped shape the South Africa we live in. They made extra-ordinary sacrifices to achieve the ideal of a free, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.

We take inspiration from these heroes and heroines of our people as we engage in efforts to reduce the scourge of road crashes and fatalities in our country.

Just like them, we commit ourselves that we will not be bowed by hardship and setbacks because road crashes and fatalities are a major hindrance towards the attainment of prosperity as envisaged by our forebears. Road crashes rob the country of the skills and talent required to build a prosperous nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we recognise that there were many who died on the roads over the Easter period this year and others were injured.

On behalf of the Government of South Africa, I would like to send our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who died on our roads and wish those who were injured a speedy recovery at home or in hospital.

This year we defined our Easter period differently from the previous years. Whereas we previously considered the Easter in narrow sense focussing only on the four days long- weekend, this year we decided to align our plans with the school holidays.

As a result, seven days were added to our programme and it ran from the 29th of March to the 9th of April 2018.

This brought our campaign in line with other mass activities that take place around the Easter period. For instance, the Rand Easter Show, which is a premiere mass event that takes place around this time, ended on Sunday, 8th April 2018.

Those of you who keep a keen interest on travelling patterns will also have noticed that there was a spike in volumes of vehicles on the roads on that Sunday (8 April 2018) as holidaymakers returned to start preparations for the re-opening of schools.

It therefore made sense that we align our road safety activations and law enforcement operations with the travelling patterns of the population. Consequently, the preliminary report we are presenting today will cover a 12-day period instead of the ordinary four days.

Ladies and gentlemen, there were significant events that impacted on our plans and are worth considering when releasing this report. Key among them is that there were four major crashes that took place in rural areas. Two of them happened in KwaZulu Natal – Greytown and Taylor’s Halt – and the other two in Limpopo – Diperere village and near Mabula Lodge in the Waterberg district.

Together these four crashes claimed thirty five (35) lives and left twenty six (26) injured. These crashes happen where they were least expected and on roads that do not normally experience a high number of fatal crashes.

The truck drivers’ strike on Monday 02 April also added complexity in that it resulted in the total shut down of the N3 and all alternative routes in Mooi River in KwaZulu Natal which is one of the busiest days in this period. This led to more than five hours delay for motorists who were making their way from the KwaZulu Natal coastal areas to the central areas.

Huge delays were also experienced in Polokwane, Limpopo on the same day as motorists were stuck in traffic congestion and were unable to drive out of the inner city to join the N1. The absence of the Polokwane Traffic Police to control and direct traffic on such an occasion is a matter of serious concern and the Road Traffic Management Corporation together with the National Road Safety Steering Committee will have to investigate this further and ensure that it does not happen again.

Ladies and gentlemen, during this Easter period, we have stopped more than a hundred and fifty thousand vehicles and issued close to hundred and ten traffic fines.

What stands out in analysing the preliminary report is that road crashes affect the poor and working class disproportionately more than other groups.

This Easter there was a noticeable shift towards the rural poor who use the roads as pedestrians.

The number of pedestrians affected by fatalities increased from **33.8% in 2017 to 37.3%** this year.

An increase was also recorded in the number of **drivers killed from 20.5% in 2017 to 25.6 %**. **Passengers** were the only user group that experienced a significant decline from **43% in 2017 to 35.5%** this year.

Of concern is the increase in the number of young children and middle-aged individuals who died as pedestrians on the roads. **Children between 0 and four years of age recoded an increase of 4.9% from 2.6% in 2017 to 7.5% in 2018**. Middle aged individuals between the ages of **50 and 54** also recorded a sharp increase from **1.3% in 2017 to 8.4% in 2018**.

The preliminary report shows that the main contributory factors to road fatalities are related human behaviour, with male drivers accounting for 71.1% of fatalities and females for 24.1%.

In 2018, human factor contributed 89.5% to the crashes as compared to the 74.3% in 2017.

The number of Jay-walking pedestrians killed on our roads also increased to 38.0% as compared to 25.2% in 2017.

The report also depicts an increase in undetermined factors which contributed 25.7% to the overall fatal crashes.

Tyre burst prior to accident increased by 67% as compared to the 60.0% in 2017.

Hit and run decreased by 16.1% in 2018 as compared to the 22.8% in 2017.

Roads and environmental factors contributed 6.2% as compared to the 19.9% recorded in 2017.

It is very concerning that some unwarranted behaviours continued unabated and this has been ably demonstrated by the successful arrests **6435** drivers who were caught speeding, **3208** drivers driving unlicensed vehicles, **300** drivers without drivers licenses, **2344** drivers without fastening seat belts and **1698** drivers driving vehicles with worn tires.

Amongst others, the highest speedsters were arrested for driving at 224 km/h at the N3 Hilton in KwaZulu Natal, followed by Free State at the N3 Warden with 208km/h, followed by Gauteng at the N12 Tom Jones in Benoni at 206km/h.

We have however been encouraged by the behaviour of the majority of motorists and all road users, who showed a willingness to obey the rules of the road.

There are indeed few who are still intransigent and many of which will be appearing in different courts all over the country to face the might of the law.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have also increased in the number of vehicles impounded in all provinces as compared to the same period in 2017.

900 vehicles were impounded in Mpumalanga followed by the Eastern Cape at 118. We generally observed an increase in the vehicles impounded in all provinces.

Amongst the highlights of our campaign this year, we arrested a man for being in possession of dagga at Knysna and another one was arrested at Brackenfell for being in possession of Mandrax. Two men were arrested on the N7 Frankdale for possessing 36 parcels of dagga.

Two people were also arrested in Knysna for hindering a traffic officer from executive his duties and a foreign national was arrested for being in possession of a fresh Rhino horn during Operation Fiela held at Coopersdal on the N4.

Ladies and gentlemen, a huge effort was made prior and during the holiday period to reduce crashes, fatalities and injuries and to achieve a 10% reduction.

The Road Safety education and communication activities were implemented by the Provincial Departments, Local Municipalities as well as transport entities focussing on pedestrian awareness, drivers' safety, passenger education, stray animal awareness, safer vehicles and alcohol awareness.

Highly visible law enforcement operations were also conducted on all the major routes with a focus on drunken driving, speeding, overloading, driving without licences, reckless and negligent driving.

In order to reduce the high rate of drunken driving, law enforcement agencies conducted operations, targeting areas and events where most alcohol is consumed.

Due to the increase in taxi violence the Kwa-Zulu Natal, our operations focused on public transport in this province. This resulted in the traffic law enforcement agencies arresting more people for driving without permits.

Despite these efforts there was unfortunately an increase in the number of vehicles involved in fatal crashes over the extended Easter period this year compared to last year with the total number standing at **430** compare to **349** the previous year.

Light motor vehicle accounted for about **44.6%** of the crashes almost the same as last year. Bakkies or light delivery vehicles accounted for the second highest number of vehicle collisions at **21.2%**, minibuses

recorded were third recorded a **1%** decrease to **9%** and busses were stable at **1.7%**.

Most crashes happened on Friday, Saturday, Sunday between 17H00 and 20H00.

Critical routes with high accident rates were identified at the planning phase and we intensified our traffic law enforcement operations in these areas.

However most of the crashes did not happen on those routes. The majority of crashes happened on unnamed village roads in **Limpopo** as well as on the **N2, N4 and R518**.

The most affected rural district municipalities in Limpopo are Vhembe, Waterberg, Mopani and Greater Sekhukhune.

Other affected municipalities were Ekurhuleni, Ethekwini, City of Tshwane, Capricorn, Ehlanzeni, City of Johannesburg, City Cape Town, Joe Gqabi, Lejweleputswa, ZF Mgcawu and Nkangala.

Because of these crashes, a total number of **510 fatalities** were recorded from March **29 to April 9** which represents a **14%** increased when compared to the **449** who died in the same period last year.

The highest increases in fatalities were recorded by **Northern Cape** followed by **the North West** and **Limpopo**.

The highest decrease was recorded by **Mpumalanga** followed by the **Free State**.

The fatalities as per provinces are as follows:

Gauteng – 89

KwaZulu Natal – 111

Western Cape – 34

Eastern Cape – 59

Free State – 27

Mpumalanga – 49

North West – 34

Limpopo – 80

Northern Cape – 27

Ladies and gentlemen, to redress the challenges experienced during this easter period, the RTMC together with all provinces will develop a road safety plan focusing on the main contributory factors of crashes such as pedestrians, impaired driving, dangerous driving and occupant safety.

We will align all provincial road safety plans with the national road safety strategy and focus our attention on the 50 national identified hazardous locations. We will do this by also heightening the driver safety educational programmes within vulnerable communities.

The process of introducing the 24/7 shift has also begun in earnest and the shift is now at different stages of implementation in provinces.

The carnages experienced during this Easter period re-affirm our decision to re-classify all road traffic offences to Schedule 5 of the Criminal Procedure Act. The re-classification will ensure that our quest for a mandatory minimum sentence for drunken driving, inconsiderate, reckless and negligent driving is realised.

We will examine the intensity of the issues regarding tyre bursts as one of the vehicle contributory factors. We will consult with all stakeholders in the tyre making industry, freight industry and public transport industry.

We are indeed disappointed by not meeting the **10% reduction** in fatalities that we had set for ourselves. However, we will not lose hope.

We will relentlessly continue our efforts to save lives because Nelson Mandela taught us that: ***“The glory in living lies not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall.”***

As I conclude, let me commend the MECs, Mayors, SALGA, traffic law enforcement officers, members of the South African Police, emergency medical service, doctors and nurses who maintained high levels of visibility on the roads throughout the Easter period.

A word of gratitude also goes out to all the fraternal organisations that assisted in making this huge success possible. This includes the youth, faith-based organisations and organisations of people living with disabilities, who undertook various campaigns to raise awareness about road safety across the Country. We are grateful to religious leaders who used their pulpits to Preach and Pray about road safety.

Let me also thank the media for their role in promoting and publicising our road safety initiatives, and ensuring that everyone in the country is aware of their responsibility. We look forward to a continued and improved relationship even further.

I also wish to commend the RTMC's National Anti-corruption Unit for their continuous efforts in dealing with bribery, fraud and corruption. However, I want to see more results from this unit in dealing with the corruption and fraud committed at Driver Learner Testing Centres (DLTCs) and driving schools. For us to restore public confidence in our system, we must also clean up these DLTCs and ensure they operate in an efficient and effective manner.

I thank you.