

Too many lives lost on SA's roads over the Festive Season

The preliminary Festive Season Road Safety Report shows that 1,612 people lost their lives on the country's roads from 1 December 2018 to 8 January 2019.



Source: pixabay.com

Releasing the report on Wednesday, 16 January 2019, at a media briefing in Tshwane, Transport Minister Blade Nzimande said the Northern Cape, Free State and Eastern Cape recorded the highest percentage increases in fatalities.

“This resulted in an 80% increase in Northern Cape from 30 to 54 fatalities. The Free State increased by 28% moving from 124 fatalities in the previous year to 159 this year, while the Eastern Cape recorded a 22% increase moving from 195 fatalities to 238,” the Minister said.

The report indicates that Gauteng and the North West were the only provinces that recorded percentage decreases in the number of fatalities.

“Gauteng recorded a commendable 19% decrease while the North West recorded only a 2% decrease,” Nzimande said.

The preliminary figures for this past festive season indicate that South Africans have managed to reduce crashes and fatalities from what it was at mid-point of the festive period.

“At the mid-point of the season in December last year, we reported that crashes had increased by 5% and fatalities by 16%. We managed to reduce crashes by 2% and 7% for fatalities,” he said.

The reduction was a result of the increased law enforcement operations, the introduction of the 24/7 shift as well as the rollout of the Evidential Breath Alcohol Test (EBAT) to deal with drinking and driving.

According to the report, at least 36% of people dying from road-related incidents were passengers. This is an increase from the 34% recorded last year.

“Pedestrian fatalities have shown a 2% decrease from 37% last year to 35% this year while driver fatalities remained at 27% and cyclist at 2%,” he said.

The statistics show that human factors account for 90% of contributory factors to fatal crashes compared to vehicle factors that contributed 4% while road and environmental factors contributed 6%.

The Minister expressed his concern on the involvement of trucks and minibus vehicles in major horrific road crashes.

“An analysis of these shows a disturbing trend where drivers from our neighbouring countries were involved in some of the major of crashes in which five or more people died. A total of 54 lives were lost in these crashes and the Free State province was the worst affected,” Nzimande said.

Evidence has also shown that drivers from neighbouring countries were also involved in serious and flagrant violations of road traffic rules by excessively overloading their vehicles and driving un-roadworthy vehicles that pose a risk to other road users.

“We will be engaging with their governments through the SADC Secretariat and other continental bodies with similar jurisdictions to ensure that we get their co-operation in dealing with the matter.

“In addition, I have directed the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) to conduct thorough investigation in each of the driving licence and testing centres (DLTCs) where South African nationals involved in these major crashes obtained their licences,” the Minister said.

Interventions implemented on the roads

During the festive season government increased law enforcement patrols and visibility on major routes such as the N1, N3 and N4 in an effort to reduce the number of accidents.

“As a result of these interventions, there was no major crash with multiple fatalities on the N1 between Bela-Bela and Polokwane and a total of 1,021 un-roadworthy vehicles with overloaded trailers were discontinued,” the Minister said.

There were 775 roadblocks conducted compared to 440 the previous year; 1,358,619 vehicles were stopped and checked compared to 1,281,062 the previous year.

A total of 765,009 notices were issued compared to 290,023 the previous year; 4,016 vehicles were discontinued compared to 3,809 the previous year and 2,967 vehicles were impounded compared to 2,808 the previous year.

“We continue to review our policies and legislation that are aimed at improving safety on our roads through proper

infrastructure, ensuring safer vehicles, influence road user behaviour and ensuring proper post-crash response,” the Minister said.

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