

Introduction of AARTO shakes up traffic fine system

Embargoed until Thursday, 3 July 10h30

At a function held in Tshwane today, the Administrative Adjudication of Traffic Offences Act (AARTO) was introduced to members of the media and around 400 stakeholders in the transport sector.

Hosted by the Road Traffic Management Corporation, the agency tasked on behalf of the Department of Transport with the implementation of AARTO, the event also marked the launch of the Act's pilot project in Tshwane. The Minister of Transport, Mr Jeff Thamsanqa Radebe gave the keynote address and later assisted the Tshwane Metropolitan Police Department in an interactive highway road block which a number of members of the press also observed.

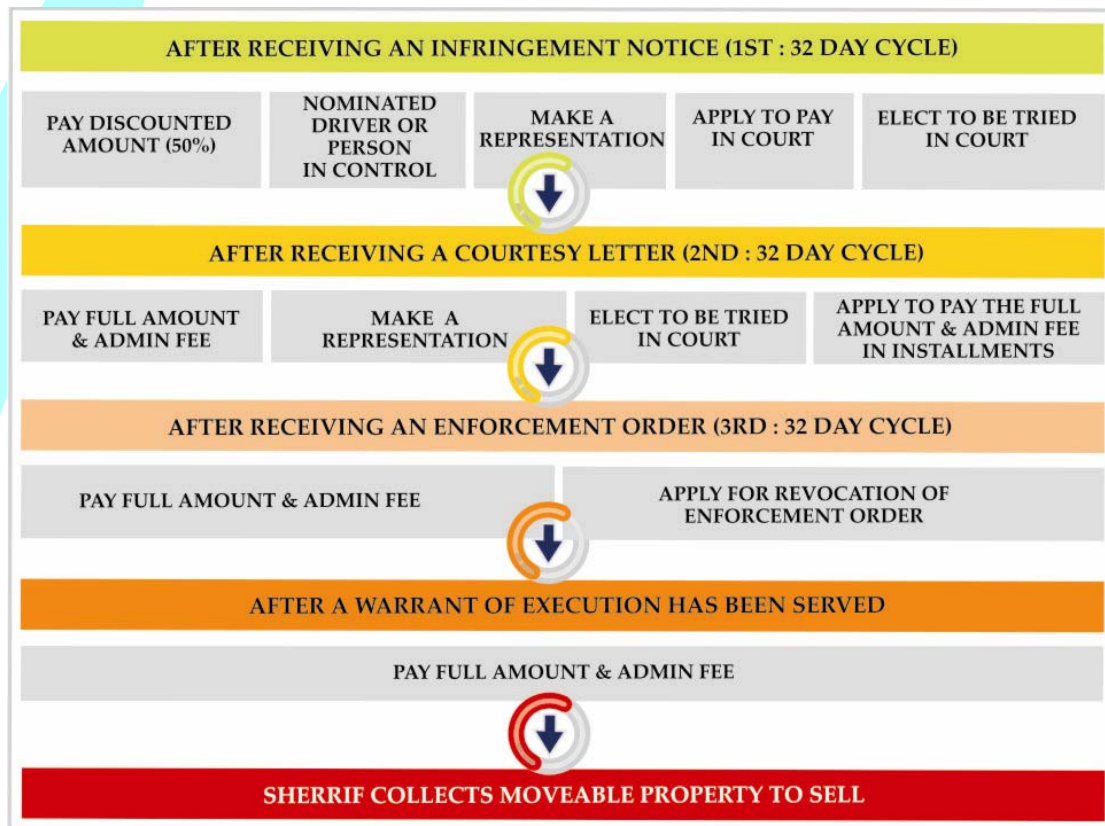
The Act has been greeted with mixed emotion as road users recognise the need for new measures to deal with the crisis on South Africa's roads at the same time as realising that their own driving habits will have to change as a consequence of new legislation.

Road traffic crashes account for over 10 000 fatalities on South Africa's roads every year, but only 10% of these result from genuine accidents. The other 90% are preceded by a traffic violation, the most significant of which is speeding.

The issue of a high rate of non compliance with speed limits and other traffic laws and a figure of only 20% for finalisation and payment of fines is now being dealt with as a priority by the Road Traffic Management Corporation

To date, levels of fines have been set by municipalities in accordance with their own systems. AARTO introduces parity of fines across municipal and provincial borders which may result in some violations carrying heavier financial penalties in some areas. Conversely, some fines may be lighter. AARTO ensures that all penalties are consistent nationally, are well administered and are followed up with a tighter collection process and resultant revenue stream which will be used for improving road safety.

All drivers receiving infringement notices, which under the AARTO system will be delivered within 5 days via registered mail, have the opportunity to reduce the amount payable by 50% if they remit payment within 32 days of receipt. Payments made outside this time frame will have to be for the full amount shown and will accrue administrative costs. If after a series of notices and enforcement orders (see table below) the payment due remains outstanding, the Sheriff of the Court has the right to seize and sell moveable property to defray costs.



The 'points demerit' system, whilst only one aspect of AARTO, is the one which has most resonance with the public and the one which has been most effective in reducing traffic offences in a number of other countries. It will only be introduced in the national roll out in early 2009, and is not part of the Tshwane pilot project.

In the event that a driver commits a traffic offence, a pre determined number of points which are allocated to that offence will be awarded against his licence. After 12 points have been exceeded, there is an automatic driving ban for a period in months equal to 3 times the number of points by which 12 is exceeded i.e. if a driver reaches 14 points he will be banned from driving for a period of 6 months. Points can be reduced at a rate of 1 point per 3 month period, providing no further demerit points are incurred during that period. Should a driver be disqualified for a third time, then his licence will be permanently revoked, and he must re-apply for his learner's licence and begin the process from scratch, but only after the expiry of the disqualification period.

All this amounts to a serious intent on the part of the RTMC to deal with the continued lawlessness on South Africa's roads. Said Mr Ranthoko Rakgoale, CEO of the RTMC, "Two of the most important catalysts which can bring about an improvement in driver behaviour and law compliance, are well planned, efficient and effective law enforcement, with the support of an equally effective and just road traffic adjudication system, and this is exactly what AARTO will introduce. Imposing serious consequences on repeat offenders at the same time as being fair on those who comply with the law is a strong incentive to drivers to obey the rules of the road. By changing the mind set of drivers, we hope to effect a significant reduction in the number of traffic crashes and fatalities on our roads."

Visit www.aarto.co.za

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