



**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, MR JOE MASWANGANYI,
ON THE OCCASSION OF THE RELEASE OF THE PROVISIONAL FESTIVE
SEASON REPORT 2017/18 HELD AT GCIS TSEDIMOSO BUILDING HATFIELD
PRETORIA**

22 January 2018

Deputy Minister, Ms Sindiswa Chikunga;

MECs;

Members of the RTMC Board;

Director General, Mr Mathabatha Mokonyama;

Deputy Director General of Roads, Mr Chris Hlabisa;

RTMC CEO, Advocate Makhosini Msibi;

HODs;

Officials from all spheres of government;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and gentlemen

First and foremost I would like to convey my heartfelt and sincere condolences to families and friends of all those who lost their loved ones on our roads in the past festive season. I also wish all those who are still in hospitals and at home a speedy recovery.

Let me remind you that we are releasing this statistics at the beginning of year in which our most celebrated former President Nelson Mandela would have turned 100 years. In recognition of this milestone, the ruling party has declared this year as: ***The 100 Years of Nelson Mandela: the Year of Renewal, Unity and Jobs.***

As the government of South Africa we recognise that there are many parents, families and friends who are asking themselves similar questions today because of the road crashes that occurred over this past festive season.

As the government of South Africa we assure them of our ongoing support and that we will do whatever possible to assist them to find answers to their questions and to find closure.

In honour of Nelson Mandela we recommit ourselves to double our efforts to make our roads safer by vigorously addressing all the contributory factors that leads to unacceptably high levels of crashes, injuries and fatalities in our country.

We therefore declare 2018: ***“The Year of Improved Road Safety in South Africa”***.

The implementation of the **Road Safety Strategy** which was approved by Cabinet in March 2017 will have to be implemented by all sectors of our society aggressively throughout the year. As government we will continue to galvanise society behind the implementation of this strategy.

Road safety, as it is often said, is everybody’s responsibility. Consistent with that appreciation, as government, we continue to create an environment which makes it possible for everyone to contribute in stabilising, reducing and ultimately elimination the road deaths in our country.

Ladies and gentlemen, at the launch of the festive season in Bela-Bela, on the 5th December 2017, we elaborated on our plan to achieve a 10% reduction in road fatalities this year through the intensified implementation of road safety education, communication and law enforcement.

Our plan recognised certain peculiarities which we had to contend with. These included the expected heavy rainfall, high alcohol consumption, the extra-long weekends because of Christmas and New Year’s days falling on a Monday.

Our plan analysed travel patterns and identified hazardous routes which needed intervention through high visible traffic police patrols. Times on which most accidents occurred were identified and motorists were according sensitised about the dangers of travelling during those times.

We also identified age groups most affected by road crashes and directed our road safety messages to them through a variety of social media communication platforms.

Ladies and gentlemen, firstly, it is important to understand that we define the festive season as a period between December 1st and the day before the re-opening of schools. Last year, schools opened earlier, and our festive season ended on January the 9th.

This year we had a longer holiday period and our festive season period ended on January 15th which was a day before the re-opening of schools.

To enable proper comparison, I will give you a preliminary report of the 1st December 2016 to the 9th January 2017 and 1st December 2017 to 9th January 2018.

Thereafter I will show you the performance up to January 15th which is our cut-off date for this year's festive period.

It is critical that we start by appreciating the fact that we entered this festive season with a higher number of registered vehicles compared to the same period in 2016. In December 2017 there were **11 028 193** registered vehicles in the country compared to **10 801 558** in December 2016.

The number of driving licences issued had increased from **12 163 813** to **12 658 135** in the same period.

When releasing the festive season report in 2017, we made commitments to deal decisively with fraud and corruption, engage the Department of Justice on the reclassification process of some road offences and also begin the process of the introduction of a 24/7 shift within the traffic law enforcement fraternity.

Evidence from this festive season period illustrate that we indeed kept our promise to make sure that our road are more-safer.

In dealing with fraud and corruption, we closed down a state-owned driving licence centre in Nkowankowa, Limpopo where learners' and driving licences were issued without due regard of the driver fitness. In this regard, five examiners and three civilians who facilitated corrupt deals were arrested. Twelve traffic officers were also arrested for taking bribes from motorists.

In Gauteng we raided three (3) privately owned vehicles testing centres and arrested **ten (10)** vehicle examiners on allegations fraudulently issuing roadworthy certificates to vehicles that they never examined.

These efforts inspired more dedicated traffic officers to also act against offers of bribes by corrupt motorists. Their inspiration resulted in the arrests of **three (3)** motorists who offered bribes to traffic officers.

Two of these arrests took place in **Limpopo** and one in the **Eastern Cape**. The total number of people arrested in this festive season on fraud and corruption charges stands at **thirty-two (32)**.

To further decisively out root fraud and corruption, we have initiated a process to audit all vehicle testing centres and driver and learner testing centres to establish adherence to regulations and standards. This process will run parallel to the investigation that is being undertaken by the **Special Investigation Unit (SIU)** as proclaimed by the State President in November 2017.

We also engaged Magistrates as part of the process to ensure that there are tough consequences for those who break the rules of the road, particularly drunk drivers, speedsters and reckless and negligent drivers. This is part of finalising the reclassification process of these offences into Schedule 5 offences, which are more severe.

The process of **introducing the 24/7 shift** has also begun in earnest. The shift is now implemented in fully in the Western Cape whilst other provinces are at different stages of implementation.

As a result of these efforts and a well executed festive season festive season plan we recorded noticeable declines in the number of fatalities in **seven (7)** provinces with the exception of the **Western Cape and the North West provinces** which recorded **7% and 11% increases** respectively.

Limpopo was a star performer as it managed to achieve the highest reduction in the q=number of fatalities followed by the Free State and KwaZulu Natal.

The highest number of fatalities was among **pedestrians which increased from 34% to 37%** and **fatalities among drivers also increased from 23% to 27%**. However, there was a **decline in passenger fatalities from 41% to 35%** which indicates that it is possible to save more lives if more people use safety belts.

While there was an **increase in fatalities** among **youthful drivers** between the ages of **25 and 34**, there was an encouraging decline in the number of fatalities among drivers between the ages of **35 and 49**.

A significant decline was noted among youthful **pedestrians** aged **25 to 34**. But there was disturbing increase among those aged **35 to 44**.

Ladies and Gentlemen, all the efforts that we put into promoting safe road usage have given us improved picture during this recent festive season holiday.

This contention is supported by information from law enforcement operation which also showed that there was improved compliance with the rules of the roads.

The number of **traffic violation notices** showed a decrease **453 263** the previous period to **304 603** in the period under review. There was a decline in the number of people who were fined for failing to wear safety belts and the number of discontinued vehicles.

While drunken driving was a major focus area during the period under review, there was however a decline in the number of motorists arrested for drunken driving from **5943** in the 2016/17 period to **3301** in the 2017/18 period.

This is another evidence of improved compliance and the success of our messages warning against drinking and driving.

However, **speed continued to be a major headache with 922 drivers arrested compared to 785 in the 2016/17 period.** Five motorists were arrested in Limpopo, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape for driving at speeds **exceeding 220 kilometres an hour in a 120 km zones.**

An impressive **43%** decline in fatalities was recorded on the **Top 13** identified hazardous routes with **244** deaths recorded on these routes compared to **429** in the previous period.

However, there was a disturbing increase in the number of **fatalities within the municipal boundaries of eThekweni, Johannesburg, Nkangala, Cape Town, Ekurhuleni, Ehlanzeni, Capricorn, City of Tshwane, Thabo Mofutsanyane and Bojanala.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, our preliminary festive season fatalities for the period starting December 1, 2017 to January 9, 2018 show that there were **1 527 people who died** on the roads in that period compared to **1 714** fatalities in the same period the previous year.

This represents a **11% decline which surpassed the 10% target.** When considering the entire holiday period from December 1st, 2017 to January 15th, 2018, there were **1 676** fatalities compared to **1 875** fatalities for the same period in the previous year.

We recognise that the success we have achieved this year would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of our traffic officers and members

of the South African Police throughout the country who sacrificed their time to assist us save lives on the roads.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all of them and wish a speedy recovery to the two traffic officers who were injured in the line of duty in **KwaZulu Natal** and the **Western Cape**.

A word of appreciation also goes to emergency medical personnel, nurses and doctors who were on duty over in accident and emergency units of our hospitals assisting to save the lives of road accident victims.

We also send our gratitude to all motorists who cooperated with law enforcement officers. We also take this opportunity to condemn all those motorists who displayed acts of aggression and violence against traffic officers.

However, we will not take a long time singing our own praises and celebrating because Nelson Mandela taught us that ***“after climbing one climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb”***.

In the coming months we will intensify the implementation of the Road Safety Strategy and roll out the **Evidential Breath Analysis Centres** in nine provinces to speed up the prosecution of those who drive under the influence of alcohol and narcotic substances.

The number of halfway stations on all national routes will be increased to assist drivers, long distance public transport and freight drivers, to deal with fatigue and lifestyle illnesses such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

In line with the proclamation signed by the President, the RTMC will work with the Special Investigating Unit to intensify investigations into allegations of unlawful and improper conduct relating to the registration and licencing of motor vehicles together with irregularities in the issuing of driving licences.

We will do these things to ensure that we continue to reduce road crashes and fatalities further than what has been achieved in the recent festive season.

I thank you.