



*Every loss, contains its own seed,  
Its own lesson, how to improve your performance the next time.”*

I take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt condolences to the families who lost loved ones during this period and our well wishes to all those who are still recuperating in hospitals as well as at home.

I also wish to convey a word of gratitude and appreciation and thank the Deputy Minister, Premiers, Ministers and all MECs for taking charge of the situation and assisting in stopping what was initially threatening to be a run-away train. Their efforts helped to pull our county from the edge of a precipice.

It is also befitting to appreciate and thank all law enforcement officers, emergency services and health professionals who worked long hours, sacrificing family time, to help us save lives on South African roads. I am aware that some officers lost their lives in the line of duty during this period. Our condolences also goes to their families, friends and colleagues.

It is saddening to note that as we gather here today, there is a mother in a village who is staring blankly at the picture of a daughter or a son she was expecting to come home for Christmas. This was supposed to have been a celebratory reunion, but sadly was not to be. Her hopes had been high until she received the news that her beloved had died in a car crash on their way home.

Since that eventful moment, the life of the family has changed for the worst and life will never be the same again. On the other hand, somewhere in a prison cell, a young man is sitting with his head buried in his hands as he contemplates the damage that his reckless, irresponsible and selfish bravado has caused. Tomorrow, as his young daughter dons her school uniform for the first time in her life and begins her first day at school, he will be standing in the dock facing a magistrate and pleading for his freedom.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have come from one of the most challenging festive seasons which stretched our resources to the limit, which also put a strain on our law enforcement operations and unleashed untold misery on many families.

However we remained unrelenting and resolute through it all and we prevailed against all the odds.

It is also important to note that the festive season road safety programme is not implemented in isolation, but forms part of an ongoing 365-day programme that the Department of Transport and its agencies in conjunction with our transport stakeholders and the general public carry out throughout the year to ensure that lives are saved.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we reflect on the 2016 festive period, we are prepared to expose the harsh truth behind the mayhem that the country has experienced and admit the period's shortcomings. In doing this evaluation we are inspired by Malcolm X when he says:

*“You're not to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality.*

*Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it.*

*If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything.”*

In December 2016, the Department, its agencies and stakeholder partners announced various measures to be undertaken to promote the safety of people on our roads throughout the festive season. As part of these measures, Cabinet also called upon South Africans to observe and obey the rules of the road.

A significant amount of financial resources were invested to promote awareness, intensify enforcement and up-scale general visibility. Public Education and Awareness campaigns were launched and some are still running across different media platforms, including radio, television, newspapers and below the line media. Strategic partnership with the likes of Engen Petroleum and Trace Urban TV Channel on #Ridewise campaign has gone a long way in planting seeds and inspiring other stakeholders to follow suite.

Ladies and gentlemen, while we accept that the back-to-back extended long weekends that characterised the 2016/17 festive period posed a big challenge to road safety and that the rainy weather provided a complicating factor, we must equally accept that in most instances the competence of our drivers leaves much to be desired.

The fact that an overwhelming majority of fatal crashes were as a result of a single motor vehicle overturning and head-on collisions points to the incompetence of our drivers to handle their motor vehicles. This buttresses the point and the aspersion of rampant corruption within our Drivers Licencing Testing Centres (DLTCs), compounded by the voluntary collusion and participation by our road users in their unflinching desire to acquire driver's licences. There is an influx in our roads of drivers who are not competent and qualified to be driving on our roads. Such drivers lack appreciation and comprehension of the importance of roads signs and golden rules of the road.

I have instructed the Road Traffic Management Corporation to undertake an audit of how driving licences as well as roadworthy certificates are processed and issued in our testing stations, so that we can have an appreciation of how it is possible that so many incompetent drivers and un-roadworthy vehicles could be on our roads. Equally important is to understand the role played by private testing stations and driving schools in facilitating the issuing of documents to unqualified motorists.

Equally important, is the Directive given to the Acting Director General to ensure that he places the issue of Provincial Heads of Departments attendance in COTO (Committee of Transport Officials) and prioritising Road Safety and Law Enforcement Agenda in their plans.

We would like to focus our audit on these centres and drivers who obtained their driving documents from those centres. On the basis of our findings it is also expected that the affected individuals can be called back for re-evaluation. South Africans, if you got your learners and driver license through dubious means know that you will soon lose it.

It cannot be that people can escape with such impunity. Our people deserve the best and it is our duty to uproot these much detested practices and get to the core of the causes of these carnages and fatalities.

I have been gratified during this festive season to note that some traffic officers had taken a bold stance against bribery and corruption. Traffic officer **Mr Fulton Flinger** of the Eastern Cape stands out among the no-nonsense officers who does not take bribes. This officer who is based in Aliwal North arrested four motorists who tried to offer him bribes to avoid consequences for speeding and possessing fraudulent documents. This officer has consistently arrested those who believe that our officers are up for sale. Officer Flinger is a shining example of a morally upright and ethical traffic officer that we are proud to have in the fraternity.

I also commend the National Anti-Corruption Unit for their efforts to ensure that we eliminate unethical traffic officers who solicit bribes from motorists. Three North West traffic officers were arrested during this period including Gauteng Traffic Officers.

I urge the MECs to follow-up on these cases and ensure that departmental steps are taken to hold these officers accountable. Wrong is wrong, and it must be punished.

Ladies and gentlemen, our traffic law enforcement officers conducted more than **432** roadblocks throughout the country during this festive period and they issued **453 263** fines for various traffic offences. Of particular interest is that **28 238** of these fines were for drivers who failed to wear seatbelts while **4 046** were for using cell phones while driving.

About **6 805** un-roadworthy vehicles were suspended or discontinued while **2 501** other motor vehicles were impounded.

To clamp down on drunken driving, speed and other moving violation, the officers arrested about **9 175** motorists and **5 943** of them, which is **65%** was for drunken driving.

A total of **18 drivers** were arrested for driving at excessive speeds of between **182 km per hour** to well above **200 km per hour**. The highest speedster was arrested in **Gauteng** travelling at **239 km** an hour in a Mercedes Benz on R21 near Tshwane. The latest speedster appeared in court yesterday after he was arrested travelling at **207 km an hour**.

Driving under the influence of alcohol, failure to wear seatbelt, using cell-phones while driving, excessive speeding, disregarding road conditions and signs reflect a negative attitude that many motorists have towards the rules of the road.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the period under review saw the introduction of **253 478** additional vehicles, which represent **2%** increase and **506 387** new drivers into our road network representing **4%** increase.

It is worth mentioning that the most problematic days of the week remained weekends, however our intensified law enforcement saw stabilization and reduction during the week days. This is due to extra-ordinary extended long weekend of the festive season.

Ladies and gentlemen, preliminary statistics show that road fatalities increased in five (5) Provinces and declined in four (4) Provinces, namely: the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Western Cape and the North West.

A total of **1 714 fatalities** were recorded in this festive period which is a **5%** increase on the previous period.

The Eastern Cape with **211** fatalities recorded the biggest decline in fatalities with a reduction of **20%** compared to the same period last year when it had **265** fatalities. We want to congratulate and commend the Eastern Cape leadership demonstrated by both the Premier and the MEC for the sterling work as they marshalled their troops towards the attainment of this significant reduction.

The same goes for North West, which recorded **8%**, the Western Cape **6%** and Northern Cape **5% reductions**. Keep up the good work and remain our shining stars. This is a clear indication that it can be done and we can win this battle.

It is disturbing to note that **Limpopo** recorded the highest increase of **31%** moving from **186 fatalities** in the previous period to **244** in this period, the KZN and **Free State** equally recorded an increase in the percentage of fatalities at **18%** and **17%** respectively. We need to get to the root cause of these unwarranted increases and ensure we implement our plans to the latter.

What is alarming is that the four provinces of KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Limpopo jointly accounted for **61%** of the total number of people who died on the roads in this period.

This year we have seen a high number of passengers dying on the roads compared to the previous period when pedestrians constituted a high number of fatalities among road user groups.

Passengers constituted **40%** of fatalities, pedestrians **34%**, drivers **24%** and cyclists **2%**. Children aged from 0 – 4 contributed 6% of pedestrian deaths. The gender mostly affected was males with a disturbing contribution of 75% of the total fatalities. Females contributed 23% which marks a 2% decrease compared to the previous year, of the fatalities, females can still do better. Very disturbingly, of this number 81% is apportioned to Blacks while the remainder is shared amongst Coloured, Whites and Asians

**Light motor cars** contributed **49%** to the total crashes followed by **light delivery vehicles** at a contribution of **18%** and **minibus vehicles** with a contribution of **10%**. The taxi industry must do more to reduce the number crashes caused by their vehicles.

The Department of Transport published amendments to the National Road Traffic Regulations in November last year aimed at regulating the transportation of persons in the load bay of light delivery vehicles for reward. The regulations will come into effect in May this year 2017 and they will assist in the reduction of the number of passengers dying in collisions involving light delivery vehicles.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Necessary actions will be taken to turn the situation around. Building on the previous and recent experiences, the Department will continue to improve its enforcement policies and strategies, and upscale public safety campaigns. Specific interventions, going forward are as follows.

- I. Review existing legislative instruments to identify areas that need strengthening and further improvements.
- II. Strengthen co-ordination and existing partnerships within government and outside government to maximize the impact of the public education and awareness programmes.
- III. Continue with endeavours to improve the state of our roads and the public transport system;
- IV. Take further steps towards the implementation of the drivers licence demerit system;
- V. Further technological innovations will be pursued,
- VI. Continue our engagements and finalise with the Department of Justice to introduce minimum sentences for negligent and reckless driving. We are seeking to reclassify drunken driving from a Schedule 3, which is less severe to a more severe Schedule 5 offence to ensure those who negligently cause crashes on the roads do not get bail easily and spend time behind bars and
- VII. Our cross-border operations will be strengthened to deal with the high incidents of cross-border minibus vehicles that are overloaded with both passengers and goods.

The arrest of a minibus driver from Zimbabwe who had **31 passengers** in his vehicle points to the need to strengthen cooperation with our counterparts in the neighbouring states.

It is noble to recognise and thank those that have been law-abiding road users who made it to their destinations without any incident. This they achieved by simply adhering to the rules of the road; driving within the set speed limit, buckling up, avoiding the use of cell phones while driving, using roadworthy vehicles, remaining calm irrespective of challenges confronting them on the roads, taking regular stops to avoid fatigue and avoiding the use of alcohol while driving.

Ladies and gentlemen, achieving the goals that we have set as the Department for the greater safety of all South Africans is a long term programme. It will require greater co-operation between the Department and all citizens.

We have committed ourselves and we shall achieve it by enforcing the law rigorously every day, ensuring that we act without fear or favour and maintaining constant high levels of visibility on all hazardous routes.

We take solace in our understanding that the rate of increase in fatalities was brought down due to urgent interventions that were implemented after the meeting of December 20 with Heads of Departments and traffic chiefs. Indications at that moment were that we were facing an onslaught of unprecedented proportions and we agreed to release resources to struggling provinces, intensify road safety communication and education campaigns and strengthen monitoring of our law enforcement operations.

These interventions helped us to contain the situation against incredible odds. Indeed the experience of 2016/17 festive season has proven what Nigeria author Ben Okri observed when he said:

*“The most authentic thing about us  
is our capacity to create, to overcome,  
to endure, to transform  
to love and to be greater than our suffering.”*

We will now begin the task of planning for the next peak travel period by ensuring that we allocate resources appropriately, that we plan and manage overtime and we

reduce fatalities every day of the year. We will use every day and every weekend as preparation for the peak periods.

We will not lose the momentum created by the efforts we put in this festive season. The Department will continue to implement ongoing campaigns to ensure that we significantly reduce road fatalities by the end of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety Campaign in 2020.

Though the picture seem bleak and the hope for those who lost their loved ones may dwindle, we remain steadfast in our commitment to confront lawlessness and rogue usage of our roads. We will forever be inspired to tell the truth no-matter what the circumstances might be. Let me once again reiterate what our fellow freedom fighter Amilcar Cabral once said.

*“Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories.”*

We all shoulder the responsibility to ensure that we are always safe on our roads as well as always jealously protecting one another. Remember the Sesotho saying that ***Ntja pedi ha e hlolwe ke sebata***, together we shall win this battle.

I thank you.