



transport

Department:
Transport
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, MS DIPUO PETERS, AT THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF MOKABA, RAMALATSWA AND SEEMOLA SIX OF THE 16 HAMMANSKRAAL CRASH VICTIMS HELD AT SESHEGO HIGH GROUND - POLOKWANE

14 January 2017

MEC for Transport, Safety and Security, Mme Nandi Ndalane
Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality, Ms Thembi Nkadimeng
and Councillors

Kgoshi ya Bahlaloga, Kgoshi Kgabo Moloto III

Traditional leaders

The Leadership of the ANC and ANC WL and ANCYL and other
parties in parliament

Baruti ba di kereke tsotlhe

Acting Director General of the Department of Transport

SANTACO leadership

Barutabana, bana botlhe

Officials of all spheres of Government and the RAF
The Bereaved families Ba ga Mokaba, Ramalatswa le Seemola

Ladies and gentlemen

We are gathered here today to mourn our fellow countrymen and women, brothers and sisters as well as children who departed under extremely tragic circumstances.

What the community of Moletjie and the other affected communities of the Limpopo province experienced this past weekend was a shock and a disaster that touched the entire nation.

Its impact was felt not only here in Limpopo but it resonated throughout the entire country and the whole world. It is for this reason that we are gathered here to share the pain and grief and convey - to the grieving families, the people of the Limpopo province and Government - that the events of the past weekend did not affect you alone, they affected all of us. Today the entire nation is mourning together with you for this is the darkest moment for us all.

On behalf of President Zuma and his government, I bring messages of condolences to the families of Mokaba, Ramalatswa and Seemola, the people and government of Limpopo province. Be consoled and comforted.

At this critical moment when we feel weak and are consumed with self-doubt we look up to the Lord, who is our Shepherd to guide us. We are comforted in the words of King David who in Psalm 23 says, I quote:

*“Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.” (end quote)*

When we heard about the crash that took the lives and injured our people, the Road Accident Fund, the consoling arm of government, activated immediate assistance with regard to funeral arrangements, the purchasing of coffins, and the transportation and storage of the deceased. Families were consulted and assistance was provided to the families who had yet to identify the departed.

Proactive service directly to those affected by road crashes, deaths and injuries is what the RAF is becoming known for. Last year over 9,000 funerals were funded by the RAF as it provides quick and accessible services to all affected. Reducing the frequency, severity and impact of accidents remains the Fund’s highest priority, as the estimated cost of road crashes to South Africa’s (SA) economy remains staggeringly high at an estimated R306 billion per annum.

Beyond the funeral services, the RAF will still be there. The RAF will work with the families and survivors to bring about relief and ensure that claims are handled expeditiously to provide support and care to

the spouses and children of our dear departed countrymen and women as well as to the crash survivors.

Far beyond claims and money, the Government through the RAF will be there with you, now and into the future – working tirelessly to ensure that you and your families move through the pain, the grief and the sadness, to a point where each day becomes a little easier.

As the Minister of Transport, I hereby appeal to all the affected that don't speak to touts, those people who say they will help you, they end up taking the bulk of the money. Speak to the Mayor or Councilors to direct you to the RAF or the MECs office.

To the bereaved families and survivors, I am saying to you, be not afraid during this dark hour of your lives, you will not walk this journey alone. The ANC government will be with you every step of the way right to the end. Your government will be your comfort and source of strength.

As Government we are extremely concerned about the unacceptably high levels of motor vehicle crashes in our country.

Ladies and gentlemen, in this past week, on the 11th January 2017, after this weekend's tragic events, there were other equally gruesome incidents that robbed our nation of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters as well as young people who had the potential to grow up and make a contribution to the development of country.

At Ntuzuma in KwaZulu Natal, a Toyota Hiace Minibus transporting twenty one (21) school children and a Bus got involved in a sideswipe opposite direction type crash that resulted in four fatalities and others injured.

At the N4 outside Middleburg in Mpumalanga a Minibus from Mozambique overturned. The crash resulted in Six (6) fatalities and eight (8) injured persons.

We have also not forgotten when one (1) adult and two (2) children burnt to death when a truck and a sedan got involved in a head rear crash and the sedan caught alight at the N3 in Harrismith.

Kgoshi Moloto, MECs, Mayors , Councillors, fellow comrades and leaders we know from the analysis of road crashes and fatalities we issued this week that a total of **1 714 fatalities** were recorded in this festive period which is a **5%** increase on the previous period.

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 is an unacceptable state of affairs. It is unacceptable because we know that road crashes are preventable and they are avoidable. Anyone who drives a vehicle with faulty brakes or steering wheel knows that at some point they will be unable to control the vehicle and that will cause a crash which will result in a loss of life. Anyone who drives at high speeds knows fully well that they may not be able to stop the vehicle if a pedestrian were to suddenly walk into the street ahead of them. And anyone driving under the influence of alcohol knows that at some point they will veer off their lane onto oncoming traffic and cause a fatal crash.

Kgoshi Moloto, the deaths of the 1714 people in this country over the festive period as well as many others who died in other parts of the country after the 9th should spur us to double our efforts to make our roads safer.

We should introduce tough new laws as a legacy from the recent events. We have already started engagements 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 to a Schedule 5 offence to ensure those who negligently cause crashes on the roads do not get bail easily and spend time behind bars.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you may be aware, I have introduced for public comment new regulations to make our roads safer. These proposed regulations are in addition to the regulations that came in effect in May 2015 compelling passengers in motor vehicles to wear seatbelts and drivers to ensure that children under the age of three years are placed on car seats or child restraints whenever they are transported on public roads.

In the new regulations, I have proposed the practical re-testing of drivers who make an application for the renewal of driving license cards. The idea is not to make applicants to rewrite test but it is for the applicant to practically demonstrate his driving ability on a vehicle code for which he or she is seeking to re- new the license. This is done in order to eliminate fraudsters and ensure that an applicant knows the rules of the roads and is fit to drive the class of vehicle for which they are seeking a license.

The regulations also seek to restrict the use of bakkies, vans and trucks, for the transportation of human beings. The regulation limits to five the number of people who may be transported at the back of a goods vehicle provided they are employees travelling to work.

The regulations are explicit that no school children may be transported at the back of bakkies, van or truck and these vehicles may not be used as taxis unless permission has been granted in terms of the National Land and Transport Act.

The regulations also seek to reduce speed limits to 40 kilometres an hour in respect of public roads within residential areas. A speed limit of 80 kilometres an hour shall apply on public roads, other than freeways, situated outside of urban areas.

A speed limit of 120 kilometres an hour shall apply on all freeways provided a limit of 100 kilometres is observed if the freeway passes through a residential area.

The regulations also seek to restrict the operation of heavy trucks on public roads between certain hours. Our proposal is that heavy trucks should be prohibited from using the road between 06H00 and 09H00 in morning and between 17H00 and 20H00 in the evening from Monday to Friday, excluding weekends and public holidays. This regulation will be effective from May 2017.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are fully aware that these measures will not yield the desired outcomes unless we improve the skills of our traffic officers and deal decisively with fraud and corruption within their ranks.

We must tackle the widespread corruption in our driving license testing centres which make it possible for an individual to obtain a driver's license without even setting a foot in a vehicle. The fraudulent issuance of roadworthy certificates must be totally eliminated if we are to reduce crashes caused by public transport vehicles and heavy duty vehicle.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have no doubt that if we implemented all these measures it will be on very rare occurrences that we come together in tragic circumstance to mourn our beloved ones who would have perished on the roads.

I trust the initiatives I have outlined will help us to attain the goal of reducing road crash fatalities by half as set out in the United Nations Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011- 2020. These seeks to implement the five pillars of the Global Plan which are building road safety management capacity, improving the safety of road infrastructure broader transport networks, further developing the safety of vehicles, enhancing the behaviour of road users and improving post-crash care.

Let us not be daunted by the task ahead of us to save lives and make our roads safe to travel in. We must be guided by the words of Nelson Mandela who taught us that, I quote:

“It always seems impossible until its done” close quote.

To the families of our dear departed and the survivors, know that our hearts ache for each and every family affected. We may have to speak as Government leaders, but know that we speak first and foremost as a caring Government. A Government that knows and feels your pain.

I invite you to take comfort in the words of God who, In Isaiah 41 says, I quote, *“Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am*

your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand, it is I who say to you, Fear not I am the one who helps you.”

End quote.

May the souls of our dear departed rest in eternal peace.

I thank you.