

Over 1,400 people die in accidents during festive season

Transport Minister Ben Martins has announced that 1,465 people lost their lives on the country's roads during the festive season. The main causes of the road fatalities during the period between 1 December 2012 and 8 January 2013 were drunken driving, excessive speeding, dangerous overtaking, not using seatbelts and unroadworthy vehicles. There were 1,221 fatal accidents recorded during the period. In the 2011/2012 festive season period, 1,475 people died on the country's roads.



(Image: GCIS)

Speaking in Durban on Thursday, Martins said the 2012 festive season road safety campaign had, among other things, emphasised the need for drivers and passengers to buckle up whenever they start a journey - even if it is for a short journey.

"People who buckle up have a greater chance of surviving when they get involved in road accidents. A number of passengers, especially women and children, died because they were not wearing seatbelts."

He said approximately 40% of the fatalities involved pedestrians, most of whom walk on the road while drunk.

"I should like to, on behalf of the Ministry and the Department of Transport, express our sincere condolences to all those who lost loved ones over the festive season ... Road traffic fatalities are amongst the main causes of death in South Africa. This results in serious social and economic costs for the country. These consequences include the loss of family members, breadwinners and leave behind traumatised families."

Fatalities cost hundreds of billions

He said at least R306bn is lost to the economy due to road fatalities each year.

"During the festive season, 17,000 traffic officers were deployed on our roads to police a road network of over 750,000km, used by more than 10 million cars," he said.

Martins added that going forward, the department will review existing legislative instruments to identify areas that need strengthening and further improvements.

"Amongst others, we will review the current alcohol limit, support the total ban on alcohol advertising, harsher measures for serial and habitual offenders including naming and shaming them, stringent criteria on driver's licence application and school campaigns on road safety," he said.

The department will also develop a single national policy on the role and functions of the road safety councils which will mobilise communities to participate in road safety campaigns.

It will also take further steps towards the implementation of the driver's licence demerit system and further technological innovations regarding the use of speed cameras.

"Achieving the goals that we have set ... will require greater co-operation between the department and all citizens. The department is committed to carrying out this responsibility to reduce road fatalities by 50% by the end of the UN Decade of Road Safety in 2020," said the minister.

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