



TRANSPORT MINISTRY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT,
FIKILE MBALULA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE RELEASE
OF THE 2021 EASTER ROAD SAFETY STATISTICS AT THE
N1 SOUTH GRASMERE TOLL PLAZA ON 8 APRIL 2021**

Chairperson of the Board of the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), Mr Zola Majavu

Members of RTMC Board

Chief Executive Officer of the RTMC, Advocate Makhosini Msibi
Officials from the Department of Transport and Entities

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, as we officially release the 2021 Easter Arrive Alive Safety statistics, we are conscious of the fact that road crashes affect the poor and vulnerable disproportionately more than any other group in society. It is this class of people that we generally find walking on the freeways in an attempt to access opportunities that are not available in their own residential areas. It is this group that commutes between their homesteads in rural areas and cities in search of job opportunities and a better life. Regrettably many of them die on the roads without realising their dreams and aspirations.

At midnight on Monday, 5 April 2021, we marked the end of our intensified law enforcement Easter campaign. However, the Arrive Alive education and awareness campaign will continue in preparation for the forthcoming Freedom Day and May Day long weekends.

Although we have taken a decision to ensure that we make road safety a 365-day business, it is inevitable that we intensify our efforts over the long weekends and when we approach the peak travelling periods such as the festive season and Easter weekend.

This is because there's remarkable rise in traffic volumes during these periods and the increased risk to life and limb of South Africans.

Preliminary figures show that we experienced an increase in traffic volumes along major arterial routes leading out of Gauteng and back. The N1 north to Limpopo, the N3 towards Kwa-Zulu Natal and the N4 towards Mpumalanga were particularly busy. This happened despite the fact that the Easter weekend did not overlap with school holidays this year and religious pilgrimages to major churches that attract masses of people, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The N3 recorded the highest volume of traffic with 151 143 vehicles travelling through various tollgates on this route. The N1/N4 followed with a total of 120 573 vehicles passing through tollgates between Gauteng, Limpopo and the North West.

The N1 south between Gauteng through the Free State to the Western Cape recorded 64 001 vehicles while 14 864 vehicles were registered on the N2 in KwaZulu-Natal.

While the public focus is around the number of fatalities recorded over this period, it is also important to make an assessment of the circumstances within which these crashes occur, and to understand each road user's responsibility.

The carnage we continue to experience on our roads is influenced by a number of factors mostly embedded in human behaviour or attitude, vehicle factors as well as environment or road factors.

There were no fatalities on Thursday when traffic volumes reached the peak. However, they spiked on Friday between 18:00 and 22:00 when people had reached their destinations and were indulging in weekend festivities that include alcohol consumption.

One of the major disturbing elements emerging from the information gathered thus far is the vulnerability of pedestrians and passengers. At least 35% of people who died on the roads are pedestrians. Their vulnerability manifests itself in the following ways:

- Drinking and walking, including jay walking,
- crossing the road at dangerous points,
- Informal settlements situated alongside busy roads and intersections
- Walking on and crossing of highways, and
- Failure to wear visible clothing at night.

Another observation we have made is that palisade fences and walls intended to stop pedestrians from entering freeways are being vandalised and broken down, increasing risk of pedestrian fatalities. This has been the case on the stretch of road where we are today.

The figures for this past Easter long-weekend indicate that our efforts in law enforcement are yielding some positive results. They also demonstrate that our messages are reaching the target audience and that the majority of road users are heeding our call to make road safety their personal responsibility.

According to the preliminary figures, 189 crashes were recorded, resulting in 235 fatalities nationwide. The provincial breakdown is as follows.

Eastern Cape	22 crashes	27 fatalities
Free- State	8 crashes	13 fatalities
Gauteng	30 crashes	36 fatalities
KwaZulu- Natal	42 crashes	54 fatalities
Limpopo	27 crashes	34 fatalities
Mpumalanga	15 crashes	18 fatalities
Northern- Cape	6 crashes	7 fatalities
North- West	15 crashes	20 fatalities
Western- Cape	24 crashes	26 fatalities

For purposes of proper analysis, we have compared the 2021 figures to the 2019 Easter statistics. We have not taken the 2020 figures into consideration because that was an abnormal period characterised by a hard lockdown which restricted inter-provincial travel and movement between districts.

Therefore, in 2019 there were 193 crashes which resulted in 260 fatalities. This means that we have made headway in reducing the number of crashes in general and fatalities in particular. The number of crashes has been reduced by 2.1% while fatalities came down by 9.6%.

This is despite the fact that there is growth in both the population size in general and the vehicle population size in particular.

The Northern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu Natal and North West recorded increases in fatalities while declines were recorded in all other five provinces.

It is however concerning to note that the number of pedestrians who died on the roads this year was higher compared to 2019.

Pedestrian fatalities increased by five percent from 30% to 35% compared to the 2019. We have observed that about 6% of pedestrian fatal crashes occurred between midnight and 02:00 in morning, when people were moving around in violation of COVID-19 curfew.

Passenger fatalities declined from 38% to 34% as there were not major crashes involving five or more deaths in a single incident. Deaths among motor vehicle drivers and cyclists remained unchanged. They remain around 30% and 1% respectively.

These results reflect the success of our relentless and tireless campaign of 365 days wherein we have made road safety a constant project and not a once-off exercise targeted only for peak periods.

The decline in both crashes and fatalities recorded is an indication that we are making progress towards achieving the 2030 global target of halving road fatalities.

Naysayers have been quick to suggest that South Africa is at the bottom of the class for road safety. These suggestions have relied on limited data and questionable research methodology bringing to question the credibility of their findings. Others have been quick to point out empirical evidence that suggests that we are far from the bottom of the class.

I must, however, hasten that we are still a long way from where we want to be, but the strides we continue to make will undoubtedly yield tangible results. It is through collaboration with civil society and embracing behavioural change by road users that we will make a telling difference.

Our relative success can be attributed to early preparation with education and awareness campaigns in communities, increased visibility of law enforcement officers, stakeholder involvement and a high-profile media campaign.

- There were 336 roadblocks conducted this Easter.
- 178 053 vehicles were stopped and checked,
- 32 070 traffic fines were issued,
- 823 vehicles were discontinued,
- 782 vehicles were impounded,

- 438 motorists were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol,
- 112 motorists were arrested for excessive speeding
- 28 motorists were arrested for inconsiderate, reckless and negligent driving and
- Two law enforcement officers – a traffic officer and a police captain – were arrested for bribery and corruption

The high number of vehicles discontinued, drunken driving and speeding arrests made reflect the success of the use of technology to improve traffic policing.

The mobile vehicle testing station assisted in the identification and removal from the roads of vehicles that could potentially have caused major crashes. The evidential breath alcohol testing technology helped to arrest motorists who were driving under the influence of alcohol, while high speed vehicles – fitted with high-tech vehicle identification systems – ensured the arrest of those who were driving at excessive speed.

The collective and collaborative efforts of our stakeholders such as SANTACO, Distell and aware.org have paid off remarkably. The fact that there were no major crashes involving minibus vehicles, is a reflection of the success of Operation Hlokomela conducted by the taxi industry.

The Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), working with provinces and municipalities will ensure the full deployment and utilisation of technology including the body cameras to improve traffic policing and fighting corruption.

The RTMC will also ensure that the National Road Traffic Law Enforcement Code is implemented to bring about a greater level of uniformity in the way that traffic law enforcers operate.

On behalf of the Shareholders Committee, comprising all Transport and Community Safety MECs in all the provinces, I congratulate all our law enforcement officers in all spheres of government, the SAPS, Emergency Medical Services, our private sector partners and road safety activists for a job well done.

The nation is indebted to you for your tireless efforts.

We also wish to thank the media who have partnered with us in spreading the word and encouraging responsible behaviour. Please continue working with us to help fight this scourge.

Most of all, thank you to the millions of South African road users who heeded the message of road safety and we urge them to continue to be road safety ambassadors.

To those who are still refusing to comply, your days are numbered. It is just a matter of time before we catch you and remove you from our roads, for you are a danger to yourselves and society at large.

We express our sincere and heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and a speedy recovery to those who sustained injuries.

Together we are striving to make South African roads safer.

I thank you.