



PRESS RELEASE

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South African Road Federation (SARF) calls for immediate action against lawless driving

The South African Road Federation (SARF) says its ready to put its full weight behind immediate action against the blatant disregard for life on South Africa’s roads.

South Africa’s staggering road crash and fatality statistics demand immediate action to curb the devastating impact on our people and the local economy. This is according to the South African Road Federation (SARF), in response to the Department of Transport’s announcement that 1 714 road crash fatalities were recorded during the 2016 Festive Season.

Minister of Transport, Ms Dipuo Peters, added in her media statement on 10 January, that despite various nationwide campaigns to promote road safety, the 1 714 fatalities recorded show a 5% increase on the previous year’s statistics. The Minister emphasised that the majority of crashes are directly attributable to driver error with crossover accidents and vehicle rollovers. The statistics also suggest that once again, the majority of these crashes are caused by driver’s who are either incompetent or have no regard for the basic rules of the road.

“SARF joins all concerned South Africans in expressing its dismay at the ongoing devastation caused by reckless and unacceptable driver behaviour,” says Neil Tolmie, President of SARF. “What should have been a joyful break, has ended as one of tragic destruction to hundreds of families, not to mention a severe cost to the economy,” he added.

SARF says that in addition to the personal devastation caused by road crashes, the costs of motor vehicle accidents include loss of GDP, coping with vehicle recovery, emergency aid, hospital admittance and the repair costs to damaged road infrastructure. In fact, the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) has estimated that the cost of just one single road fatality is as

much as R5.43 million.

“Accordingly, this holiday’s season’s road crash rate has cost the South African economy over nine billion rand,” says Tolmie. “While we do commend the Department of Transport’s various road safety initiatives, it seems that the actions taken to date have done little to stem the scourge the lawlessness on our roads,” he added.

SARF also commends the Minister of Transport for indicating the various steps that the Department will take to punish reckless driving, including heavy fines and the removal of dangerous and incompetent drivers from our roads. However, it believes that as a first step the current legislation needs more robust application.

SARF says that it strongly supports a sustained enforcement approach as opposed to peak traffic period enforcement so that lawlessness is addressed on an ongoing basis. “It’s time that reckless drivers understand that traffic offenses will not be tolerated and will lead directly to exposure, prosecution and sentencing,” he added.

SARF has also advocated the development, implementation and management of a clear and comprehensive national road incident reporting information system, to gain a clear understanding of the root cause of problem. The Federation believes that the current reporting systems make it virtually impossible to attribute the cause of accidents to specific fundamental factors, such as environmental conditions, driver behaviour, vehicle condition or road geometry. “Without the analysis of such information, the formulation of a cogent action plan is out of reach,” says Tolmie. “This situation needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.”

SARF adds that focussed road safety education, particularly at junior school level, is a vital component of a comprehensive solution. It has been shown that providing young learners with an understanding and appreciation of the rules of the road, does contribute towards creating a generation of future law-abiding road users. SARF has therefore also spearheaded various initiatives to provide traffic learner centres.

South Africa has also seen several successful initiatives over the past few years that have resulted in a clear reduction in road crash fatalities. It says that it is therefore possible to find solutions that will make a difference.

“SARF and its member base – being representative of the entire road transport sector – are well

placed to provide the expertise, energy and resources required to assist government in finding sustainable solutions to road safety challenges,” says Tolmie. “Once again, we extend our support to the local, provincial and national authorities as well as other interested parties to help redress this dire situation,” he concluded.

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