

SA records reduction in festive season fatalities

South Africa has seen a 30% reduction in road fatalities since the start of the festive season, says Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula.



"I am pleased to report that as a result of efforts we have made to heighten law enforcement, the effective coordination of law enforcement operations by the Road Traffic Management Corporation and an improvement in responsible road usage, we have seen a significant decrease in fatal road traffic crashes so far this festive season," the Minister said on Monday.

The reduction in fatalities is from 1 December to 22 December 2019.

Addressing a media briefing on the 2019/20 mid-festive season road safety statistics at the Beitbridge border post in Musina, Limpopo, Mbalula on Monday said 589 people had died on the roads.

All provinces recorded a reduction in fatalities, with Gauteng reducing fatalities from 133 last year to 95, while KwaZulu-Natal went down from 172 to 135.

The Western Cape went down from 85 fatalities to 54, while the Free State, which was sitting at 80 fatalities last year, has seen fatalities reduced to 56.

Mpumalanga went from 83 to 40, the North West from 60 to 36, Limpopo from 94 to 73 and the Northern Cape from 29 to

Mbalula said the majority of those who died were pedestrians at 39%, followed by passengers at 34%, drivers at 26% and cyclists at 1%.

"We will intensify our efforts on pedestrian and passenger fatalities by ramping up policing inside suburbs, townships and villages. Law enforcement operations focusing on drunken driving and the wearing of seatbelts will also be increased," he said.

Law enforcement gets stricter

A total of 489 fatal crashes have been recorded, which is a 25% decrease compared to 656 fatal crashes recorded over the same period last year.

Since the beginning of the festive season campaign, a total of 629 661 vehicles were stopped in 539 roadblocks staged nationwide.

This resulted in 231,937 traffic fines being issued to motorists for various transgressions of the law.

"However, the number of traffic fines issued is less than those issued over the same period during the previous festive season by 101 595. This is an indication of improving compliance with the rules of the road by many motorists. I must hasten to add that this is no cause to celebrate because every transgression is a potential fatality," Mbalula said.

Improved driver behaviour

The number of arrests decreased from 3,052 previously to 2,915, representing a slight improvement in driver behaviour.

"However, we remain concerned about the high number of people who continue to drive under the influence of alcohol," said Mbalula.

This as a total of 1 397 drivers were arrested for drunk driving, while 272 were arrested for driving at excessive speeds and 438 had outstanding warrants of arrests for failing to pay previous traffic fines," the Minister said.

He warned motorists against bribing law enforcement officials.

"Those who solicit and pay bribes enable this corruption, which ultimately undermines our efforts to save lives on our roads. The days when motorists were able to bribe their way out of facing the consequences of the law are over," the Minister said.