

# Festive season driving: a safe trip starts long before you hit the road

As would be expected, thousands of people are preparing to travel to family and friends over the festive season. It has been a hard year due to Covid-19 and lockdown and families are craving this precious time together.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

Richard Green, national director of the South African Motor Body Repairers' Association (Sambra), says motorists must expect the unexpected on our roads and be prepared for an emergency.

"Road trips should be fun and memorable. The reality, however, is that the road death toll increases at this time of the year and many holidaymakers do not reach their destinations safely.

"Current weather patterns have also brought a lot of rain to many parts of the country, which heightens the risk for motorists," he says.

## Sambra's 15-point road trip checklist to stay safe (and have fun):

### Before you leave home

1. Plan your trip. Do pre-route checks and be aware of the weather on your route. If you can make a stopover, do so.
2. Save all the necessary emergency numbers into one or more cellphones- your insurance company (for roadside, medical and other assistance), family or friends on standby in case of an emergency, your family doctor and the national 10111 police emergency number.
3. Have copies of IDs, driver's licences, medical aid cards and Covid-19 vaccination certificates with you, as well as the blood type of everyone in the family.
4. Have your car serviced. Many workshops offer free pre-holiday checks. You should at least have the tyres, brakes, battery and fluid levels checked. Do not ignore any issues the workshop technician may pick up as this could see you stranded in the middle of nowhere.

5. Check you have the mandatory emergency triangle in your boot, a jack, a good spare tyre and a well-stocked basic first-aid kit.
6. Pack extra supplies, like water, healthy snacks and a few light blankets, in case you must wait on the side of the road for assistance. An extra cellphone with a full battery is also always a good idea in the first-aid kit.
7. Get at least two good nights' rest before your trip. It is best to leave after a good rest not after a long day at work. Experts say you should avoid leaving between 1pm and 3pm when the body's temperature is lower, and people are naturally drowsy.

## On the road

1. Always use your handsfree kit for calls..
2. Make use of your GPS – even if you know where you are going. These devices provide a lot of extra information for a safer trip..
3. Stop to stretch your legs every two hours. Take at least a 20-minute comfort break..
4. Tune into the local radio stations in the area to be aware of any traffic issues ahead..
5. Stick to the speed limit and other road rules..
6. Keep passengers entertained and pets contained..
7. Keep in touch with family or friends..
8. Don't take a chance when your fuel is low, rather fill up when you can.

“The same checks and cautions should be carried out when heading home,” Green says.

“Reach your destination and return home safely with wonderful holiday memories by making sure you prepare the family and your vehicle very well for the trip and that you obey the rules of the road at all times.

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