

MEDIA STATEMENT
ISSUED BY THE ROAD ACCIDENT FUND
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
10 January 2017

HIGH FESTIVE SEASON DEATH TOLL TROUBLING

All information contained in this press statement must be attributed to the Road Accident Fund Chief Executive Officer, Dr Eugene Watson:

The scourge of car crashes and related fatalities has reached disturbing proportions and if not curbed by all road users will continue to place untold strain on South Africa.

Speaking after today's release of the alarming festive season accident statistics by Minister of Transport Dipuo Peters, Road Accident Fund (RAF) Chief Executive Officer Dr Eugene Watson said the 5% increase in road deaths was sad.

"The RAF, government's consoling arm, has been hard at work during the holidays working with affected families and crash victims while providing all the necessary support. To the families, friends and colleagues of the over 1 700 people who died this festive season, we offer our condolences," said Dr Watson.

"To the millions of road users who remained alert while travelling, we thank you for heeding the RAF's call to stay safe. The death of bread winners, heads of families, and economically active youth at the threshold of their lives, as well as innocent young children and toddlers, weighs heavily on our country, sets society back and harms our economy."

Drunken driving, speed, unroadworthy vehicles, fatigue, over taking on barrier lines and failure to wear visible clothing at night are some of the main causes for road deaths, and all road users will have to pull together to stop the carnage.

Road Safety remains a priority at the RAF and awareness is generated through: campaigns such as 'My Road Your Road', which encourages road users to also think of others when making use of SA's vast road network; educational programmes with taxi organisations, truck drivers, cyclists, athletes and children; and implementation of road safety measures with provincial authorities to prevent re-occurrence of road crashes.

Despite its good intensions including that of government and other transport entities, the RAF's claims expenditure still remains unacceptably high at over R32 billion per annum, where each rand paid is painful reminder of the extent to which lives are lost and people seriously injures on our roads. The claims expenditure, coupled with liabilities of more than R150 billion, represent large sums of money our country could assign to valuable services and infrastructure if the war on road crashes is won.

Despite the limitations and challenges the RAF contends with, we will honour our commitment to cover, compensate, and rehabilitate all those unfortunately injured on our roads. Road Safety must become a South African trait and not serve as challenge we contend with.

"We cannot afford to tire in changing road behaviour and the RAF will be continuing in its efforts to ensure all road users heed the message. We thank all those road users who have done just that during the festive season and everyone to continue telling a good story about how they obey the rules of the road."

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