

## Law enforcement key to success of Arrive Alive

By Nicholas Neveling

Effective law enforcement is crucial if the Arrive Alive campaign is to successfully achieve its aim of reducing road deaths by 5% each year until 2005.

In December last year Arrive Alive suffered a blow when death toll on South African roads climbed to 1125 from the 839 deaths in December 2001.

Experts agree that a shortage of traffic officers was the main reason behind the increase and are adamant that a communication campaign alone is not enough to reduce the number of fatalities on South African roads.

“Statistics show that after drivers see a traffic officer their behaviour on the road improves for 17 to 19 minutes. The biggest factor in the deaths on our roads is that there are not enough traffic officials,” says Johan Jonck from arrivealive.co.za, an independent website focusing on road safety issues.

Moira Winslow from lobby group Drive Alive agrees.

“There are insufficient numbers of traffic officers out on the roads. If road deaths are to come down then we need to have more visible traffic policing,” says Winslow.

This has not fallen on deaf ears, and the Transport Department has recognized the importance of backing up the Arrive Alive communication campaign with sufficient law enforcement.

“We must have maximum traffic police visibility and maximum law enforcement.

“For as long as owners of vehicles and drivers as well as other road users generally hold the belief that they can break the law with impunity and nothing will happen to them – for so long will there be weak law compliance.

“Law enforcement and law compliance go hand in hand,” says Transport Minister Dullah Omar.

The difficulty facing law enforcement, however, is that the various traffic departments do not report to the Department of Transport. Instead, they fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and traffic departments are run by the provincial MECs.

“The MECs have differing objectives and in order to be effective they need to they need to dovetail better and work together. This would make a great difference,” says Winslow.

Achieving co-operation between the provinces and the Department of Transport in road safety management is one of the challenges Arrive Alive has been tasked with.

To facilitate this cooperation, the Department of Transport and the Provincial departments recently met and together devised a uniform six-point plan that all Provinces have pledged to follow.

The plan will focus on improving law enforcement by managing resources better and increasing visible policing. The Provinces will also crack down on unroadworthy vehicles and overloading, ensure that drivers are correctly licensed, follow up on driver fitness by introducing compulsory stops on certain routes and continue the Arrive Alive campaign to change attitude and behaviour.

“We must implement the plan and assist each other. From the side of National, we will do whatever we can to support the Provinces in the actions which they take,” says Omar.

From November 2003 to January 2004 the transport Department and the Provinces will be working together on Operation Juggernaut as a part of implementing the six-point plan.

The operation will pay particular attention to driver fitness and vehicle roadworthiness. Key city areas, district areas and major exit and entry points will be surrounded by roadblocks which will be manned by traffic officers, the South African Police Services and the Defence Force.

Any suspect vehicles and drivers will be taken to a vehicle testing station or weighbridge for a thorough inspection.

The Transport Department has made an amount of R12 million available to the provinces to mount Operation Juggernaut. The money is to be used exclusively for the purposes of the operation.

In addition to Operation Juggernaut, two other initiatives are currently in the pipeline to improve co-operation between the Provinces on road safety management.

The Administrative Adjudication of Road Traffic Offences (AARTO) is a system that plans to penalise drivers who repeatedly infringe on the with a points system. Once a driver reaches a certain number of points, his/her license can be taken away.

“This can be an exciting programme which can solve many of our problems,” says Omar.

The Transport Department is also working on the introduction of the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC).

The RTMC will be an overarching body that will pool the resources of the Provinces and National government. It will aim to remove inefficiencies and devise a uniform strategy for the Provinces.

“At meetings between myself as National Minister and the nine provincial Ministers we have given and continue to give high focus to our Arrive Alive campaign.

“We have unanimously agreed that the Fragmented Law Enforcement system which we inherited is wholly inadequate and fragmented,” says Omar.

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