

One man's drive

When it comes to road safety one man can make a difference. This was proved over a period of five years by Free-State-based attorney Johan Jonck.

Jonck single-handedly started the website ArriveAlive.co.za back in 2003. Since then, the website has expanded its free information offering to the point where it can fairly claim to be "South Africa's road safety website".

The site has also gone a step further, helping South African motorists to contribute to a growing pool of information – on hazardous road conditions, on bad drivers – aimed at increasing awareness of road safety and reducing the number of deaths on the country's roads.

Jonck started ArriveAlive.co.za in his private capacity in March 2003, after losing his mother and a friend in separate car accidents. The site complements the government's Arrive Alive campaign, and was developed in co-operation with the Department of Transport, which provides statistical information and news releases.

ArriveAlive.co.za covers road safety topics across the board, ranging from vehicle and driver fitness, drunken driving, aggressive driving, drowsiness and speeding to the safety of other roads users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

Users can find out what to do in case of an emergency or accident – and visitors to South Africa will also find the site useful, with easy-to-find information on trip planning and hiring a car in South Africa.

The developers pay close attention to feedback from the public, and new information is regularly added.

Reporting bad driving

South Africans can also register via the website as "voluntary traffic observers" and make online submissions on bad driving. These registrations and reports are delivered directly to the Department of Transport's national traffic call centre.

In October, according to the latest ArriveAlive.co.za newsletter, 49 people registered online as voluntary traffic observers, with 96 online reports of bad driving.

"When the same people appear regularly [in reports on bad driving], the documentation can be provided to the prosecuting authority for analysis and investigation for possible legal action," Jonck told ITWeb.

"The reports on bad driving from the website show there is a lot of goodwill among the public, and the need to make a contribution."

Reporting hazardous road conditions

Another section added to the site allows road users to report on road conditions such as potholes, missing traffic signs and flooding. These reports are emailed to the Department of Transport's call centre, which relays the information to departments of roads, public works and transport countrywide.

"We need to use all technology available, and it makes sense that it is much easier to report hazardous road conditions once at the office or at home than having to contact a call centre while driving," Jonck told ITWeb.

An information portal

Jonck concedes that most South African road users do not have Internet access, but argues that the site makes information available to popular information providers such as newspapers and magazines.

"The Internet can be used effectively to create an information portal for the wider distribution of road safety messages and creation of awareness of road safety," says Jonck. While we might not all be able to contribute financially, Jonck believes we can all add intellectual capital through ideas and recommendations - and urges South Africans to make their voices heard in the joint effort to make the country's roads safer. ♦

(Article from "SAinfo reporter" at www.southafrica.info)

