

Stay Alert Stay Alive

Road Safety Social Responsibility Project

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Summation: Concentrating on Drinking and Driving
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1. Australia has eighteen million vehicles on their roads. About 60% more than South Africa (12 541 566 – March 2019). Their latest fatality figure for a full year is 1,252 with South Africa's being almost 15,000. Australia's fatalities per 100,000 vehicles is 7.3 whereas South Africa's is 134. In other words, it is 18 times more dangerous to drive on South Africa's roads than on Australia's.
2. Let us look at a few other statistics of countries with similar road, car and tyre conditions to that of South Africa. Japan is 6.5; Germany 6.8; Italy 7.3; Israel 9.7; Sweden 4.7; Netherlands 6.0; United Kingdom 5.1. Just taking the UK figure as an example, it means that South African roads are 24 times more dangerous as those in the UK.
3. So, what is there left to cause this pathetic situation – it can only be the driver and in some instances the condition in which he or she maintains their vehicle.
4. What is the solution? To drastically reduce the number of crashes on South African roads. The major causes of the carnage, and consequently the serious injuries, must be identified and immediate urgent steps taken. What are the most important reasons for collisions?
 - i. Drinking and Driving
 - ii. Reckless Driving
 - iii. Unlicensed Driving
 - iv. Unroadworthy vehicles
 - v. Distractive Driving (e.g. cellphone usage)
5. It is believed that in excess of 90% of crashes on the road lie in the above 5 factors. Needless to say, some are the result of a combination, such as the unlicensed drunk driver.
6. Let us start with drinking and driving. Estimates are that about 60% of the crashes on the roads are the result of alcohol and road use. This includes drunk pedestrians

7. In South Africa, it is a national sport to drive intoxicated. The chances of being caught are low. If caught, corruption often results in no further action. Any appearance in court will usually result in the State asking for a postponement as blood tests have not timeously come back from the State laboratory. It is well known that such blood tests to determine the blood alcohol concentration of the driver take a ridiculously long time. Hence, charges are withdrawn. All in all, it is common knowledge that the chances of a successful prosecution is unlikely. It is estimated at less than 6%.
8. The answer to drinking and driving in South Africa is that drunk drivers must know there is no chance of getting away with it. Blood tests must be sent to private laboratories, where the turnaround time is between 2 and 4 hours. The convicted party, like in England, must pay the “costs” of these tests as an extra part of his or her sentence. One’s driving license must be cancelled. Harsh sentences must be imposed. Publicity must be given to the fact that a drinking and driving conviction does result in a criminal record – which will have dire future consequences. Further drinking and driving must be elevated to a Schedule 5 offence. This will result in the current ease of bail being eliminated.
9. Similar action must be taken with respect to the other 4 major causes of carnage on our roads. Reckless driving, like drinking and driving is a criminal offence under the National Road Traffic Act. Remember, a person driving at 194 km/h is convicted of Reckless Driving and not speeding. Speeding is only the evidence of the offence (NB. A person will only be arrested on a highway for Reckless Driving when driving at over 40 km/h above the speed limit).
10. Some statistics place the Unlicensed Driving factor as high as 40%. This includes driving with a forged license, bought license, friend or family member’s license, cancelled license, learner’s license or no license at all.
11. Unroadworthy vehicles must be impounded or taken off the road until retested after repairs.
12. Unlawful cellphone usage must be stopped in terms of the provision in the National Road Traffic Act.

Please see full Notes: approximately 20-page bundle including Case Study Annexures. Above is merely a ‘head note’ type summation.

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