



MEC'S MESSAGE FOR CHRISTMAS



The festive season is upon us once again. This is indeed a special time for us to celebrate responsibly and be happy, surrounded by those who are near and dear to our hearts.

Tradition dictates that virtually all roads lead to the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, which means most major routes throughout the Province are dealing with an influx of visitors.

We would like to thank all staff who are classified as essential services for all the work that they are putting in throughout the festive season. They are a great example of what it means to be a patriot, willing to make a sacrifice in the service of their compatriots and women.

Now that most industries have closed for the holidays, many people will be returning home from places of work outside of the province, and many holiday-makers will be entering the province, while others will be traveling within KZN.

Unfortunately, this heightened holiday activity tends to lead to an increase in the number of incidents of trauma and fatalities resulting from road crashes, violence and drownings. However, it has been proven repeatedly that most road accidents happen as a result of human error, including failure to adhere to road traffic rules. During this time, communities also experience a higher incidence of social ills and crimes, which lead to violence and trauma.

The net effect of all of these incidents amounts to increased pressure on government resources, including more people having to be treated in government hospitals, requiring rehabilitation or social grants, let alone those who pay the ultimate

price – death. But, truth be told, things do not have to be this way. I wish to call on all road users to exercise by staying on the right side of the law. It starts with you, by doing the little things, such as adhering to the speed limit, not drinking and driving, and ensuring that your vehicle is not overloaded and is roadworthy.

To those who drink, you can have a designated driver - the person who will not be drinking on the night. To those who go partying together, do not allow a drunk person to drive you back home, because this is your life, and you might die or seriously injure yourself during a road crash.

Let us protect ourselves and behave responsibly, because when you drive while under the influence of alcohol, there is a very high possibility that you might harm not only yourself, but also those of us who don't drink... who are not in the car with you, and were not drinking with you. So, your actions might end up affecting many families.

When such incidents happen, it affects us severely as the Department of Health, because we end up with full beds and a heavier workload on our healthcare professionals, just because someone decided to drink and get on the road. Ultimately, it is these little things that will help prevent unnecessary loss of lives, as well as the saving of our limited health resources.

The school holidays also mean that many young people will have a lot of time on their hands. Left unsupervised, some of them may want to experiment with potentially dangerous things, such as unprotected sex and alcohol consumption. It is irresponsible for parents to allow their children to experiment with alcohol "just because it's the festive season" because the habit may stick with them for life.

We also urge parents to find the courage to speak openly to their children about

matters of sexuality, including the benefits of abstinence, and the dangers of unprotected sex. If you don't speak to your children about sex, there's a very real possibility that they will find out about it from their peers and be misinformed – or through the internet. As a Department, we generally always encourage abstinence from sex for as long as possible – until one is physically and psychologically ready to deal with its consequences.

For those who cannot abstain from sex, we encourage the use of male and female condoms, which are available free of charge; as well as the usage of the various family planning options that we offer. It is important for men and young boys to note that they, too, have a responsibility to prevent unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. We encourage men who believe they have fathered enough children to seriously consider undergoing a vasectomy. The month of December marks one of the most important days in the health calendar: World AIDS Day, which we commemorated on 1 December. It is important for all of us to remember that HIV is not a death sentence, but a manageable disease.

We once again call on all South Africans to stand together and unite in the fight to curb the spread of HIV. Let us ensure that we get tested for HIV, so that those of us who are HIV positive know their status, get initiated on treatment and adhere to it. This will enable them to live longer and healthier lives, and even attain viral suppression.

We have a collective responsibility to ensure that people living with HIV are never ostracised, discriminated against or made to feel sub-human in any way, shape, or form.

I wish you all an enjoyable and safe December and January holiday season, and a prosperous New Year.

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HOD'S MESSAGE FOR CHRISTMAS

Firstly, we would like to wish all our employees a safe and enjoyable December and January holiday season. Thank you for all the hard work that you have been putting in throughout the year.

We are also grateful for all the sacrifices you've made, including in extremely difficult times for COVID-19.

We know that many of you, such as our emergency personnel, nurses and doctors and some support staff, will be working during the busy festive season.

We want you to know that your hard work does not go unnoticed.

While the festive season ought to be a jubilant period, some members of the public, particularly youth, tend to overstep the mark by engaging in risky and irresponsible behaviour, such as the abuse of alcohol, drugs, drinking and driving, drinking in public, and engaging in unprotected sex.

However, adults have also been known to behave recklessly.

We are therefore calling upon all visitors and the people of this Province to enjoy the festive season responsibly by, among others, ensuring that they drink responsibly, and not drive while under the influence of alcohol and drugs; or engage on unprotected sex.

This will reduce the workload on our dedicated and hardworking healthcare professionals, who are doing all they can to save lives and heal those who are sick.

We would like to appeal to all holidaymakers to make the most of our beautiful province during this period and enjoy themselves – but to do so without contravening the law.



Always keep at your best behaviour. Don't allow a few minutes of what appears to be 'fun' to spoil the rest of your future.

Unprotected sex could lead to an unplanned pregnancy, STIs or HIV. It's better to abstain from sex or to use condoms at all times. Also, don't abuse drugs and alcohol.

We wish you all a festive season to remember. We wish all Christians a Merry Christmas, and everyone a happy and prosperous New Year.

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EMERGENCY NUMBERS AND HOW TO CONTACT KZN HEALTH EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS):

When you need assistance, kindly call the following numbers:

Emergency - Cell phone (112)
Police (10111)
Fire (10177)

KZN EMS can be contacted by dialling 10177

Advice to people when phoning any emergency number:

- Give full details of the reason for calling the

emergency number (there has been a car accident etc).

- Answer all the questions you are asked.
- Do not exaggerate the extent of the emergency.
- Do not hesitate to give a phone number that you can be contacted back on and personal numbers.
- Provide clear and exact

directions to where the emergency is.

- It is advised that you have the following information when making an emergency call.
- The nature of the emergency.
- The details about any injuries and possible suspects.



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STAY ALIVE AND SAFE THIS FESTIVE SEASON!!!

With the December holiday upon us, KZN Health Chat helps you find ways to stay alive, on the road and on the beach.

For many people, the end of yet another long year of working hard calls for a break from our usual, busy lives. This often means embarking on a trip somewhere far away, usually to another part of the country, for some much-needed rest and a different experience.

Traditionally, this means that the country's roads will have more vehicles than usual, which increases the chances of road crashes. These often result in deaths, serious injuries, or disabilities, which change people's lives - and those of their loved ones - forever.

Bad decisions and various forms of irresponsible behaviour - such as speeding, drinking and driving and talking, texting or capturing photographic or video "selfies" on the cell phone while driving - also contribute to the number of people who die during the holiday period.

As many people will visit the beach in order to cool down from the December heat, it is always important to respect the sea and its currents. Make sure you know and understand the Do's and don'ts.

You can avoid becoming a statistic by doing a few small things the right way.

According to Arrive Alive, the following tips must be followed in order to stay safe:

- Obey the rules of the road and carry your driver's license with you.
- Plan the route to your holiday destination and allow yourself enough time to reach the destination.
- Make sure that your vehicle is in a roadworthy condition before departure. All lights and indicators, windscreens, windscreen wipers, brakes, steering, shock absorbers, exhaust system and tyres should be carefully examined for faults.
- Do not overload.
- Try to avoid driving after dark if possible.
- Have a good rest before you embark on your journey.
- Take safety breaks every 2 hours or 200km. Rest, have an energy drink and continue once well rested.
- Do not drink and drive.
- Try to recognise potentially dangerous drivers on and pedestrians alongside the road and keep well clear of them.
- Be visible - drive with your lights on.
- Headlights should be dipped well before an approaching vehicle is within the range of the main beam.
- Always wear your seat belt and see that everyone in the car is wearing theirs.
- Drive defensively.
- Stay within the speed limit at all times.
- Only overtake when it is absolutely safe to do so.
- Maintain at least a 2-second following distance - this distance should be increased at night, in foggy or rainy conditions and when the road is wet.
- Expect others to not be as obedient to the law as yourself.
- Avoid distractions on the road such as texting, conversations on cellular phones etc.
- Be courteous towards fellow road users - keep your temper and resist the temptation to retaliate.

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KZN HEALTH MEC'S IMPASSIONED PLEA TO HEALTHCARE WORKERS:

“WE'RE GIVING YOU NEW AND IMPROVED EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES - PLEASE USE THEM. AND DON'T BE 'EMBARASSED' TO SEE A PSYCHOLOGIST, OR SPIRITUAL LEADER”.

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Ms Nomagugu Simelane has made an impassioned plea to healthcare workers in the Province not to neglect their psychological wellbeing. She has emphasised that seeking counselling or spiritual help is not a sign of weakness. Speaking during the launch of the Department's Employee Health and Wellness programme in Dannhauser recently, MEC Simelane said: “We know you get exposed to gruesome scenes. Please do not suffer in silence, and do not feel ‘embarrassed’ to see a psychologist if you need to.” While acknowledging that many staff members worked long hours, had inadequate sleep, and were often socially isolated as a result, the MEC warned against the effects of work-related stress, which could manifest in dangerous emotional and physical outbursts, as well as other social disorders.

“You'll have a situation where even a woman gets home and becomes a monster, assaulting her own children for nothing... But you becoming a monster may not be of your own doing, but due to what you go through and see on a daily basis, but you're not able to deal with it psychologically.” The MEC lamented the fact that her plans to strengthen the programme, which she first spoke about in 2019, were scuppered by the onset of COVI-19. She further acknowledged that, at the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the looting and destruction of private property and the subsequent flooding in many parts of KZN, had all taken an even heavier toll on healthcare workers across the board.

The MEC used the occasion to introduce Dr Nokuthula Dlamini, the Department's newly-appointed director for Employee Health and Wellness. She would be establishing structures across the Province, in order to ensure that psychologists and employee wellness practitioners are available to all staff. The Province currently has 34 wellness practitioners. MEC Simelane said: “Dr Dlamini will also have a programme to ensure that in each district we have a psychologist who must be accessible. We don't want this programme to be seen to be focusing only on certain categories of healthcare workers and not others, which will make others feel left out. It becomes a programme for all of us.

She said the programme would be conjoined, with psychologists, employee wellness practitioners, and social workers on one hand; as well as the chaplaincy, led by Bishop Mthokozisi Luvuno and his team. They would be trained on how to assess and refer staff accordingly.

“So, if you don't want a psychologist, we'll offer you spiritual support.” Turning to the Forensic Pathology Services and Emergency Medical Services staff in attendance, MEC Simelane said: “We acknowledge that none of you are machines. You're as human as the rest of us.

For instance, many of you are often exposed to some of the most traumatic and gruesome scenes imaginable. You sometimes have to deal with dismembered bodies and piece them back together. How many of us would be able to put up with that? Not many. So, why do we think they can make it through that environment when we don't give them the support they need? “So, as a Department we have a responsibility to ensure we provide them with that support. We are at a point right now where we're beginning to provide that support, and we want to do it vigorously.

“We know that the programme has been in existence, but it's never been enough. We're starting afresh now, and going full-scale. Given that we're now in the December holidays, there'll be a lot of road crashes. That is why we are launching this programme now. We want to ensure that we're available to assist on all the national roads.” The MEC pleaded with staff across the board to protect their psychological wellbeing and have an open mind.

“When we request you to go and get psychological assistance, please do it. This works as a two way street: while we have a responsibility to provide this service, it will not help you if you don't think it's necessary. “We are at a point right now where we're beginning to provide that support, and we want to do it vigorously. As we continue, all of us must know where to go if we need a psychologist or chaplain. Let's all embrace this programme, and make a commitment that we will participate in it.

“If you get referred to this programme, please allow yourselves to look inward and be honest, and say, ‘yes, it looks like I need to be seen by a professional who can help with my situation or condition.’ Ours is to ensure you get the support that you require.”

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“DO NOT TAKE A HOLIDAY FROM YOUR CHRONIC MEDICATION,” URGES KZN HEALTH MEC

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Ms Nomagugu Simelane has urged those who are on chronic medication to take their medication as prescribed, adding that the “festive mood” should not result in people “taking a holiday” from their medication.

The MEC was speaking at a special community outreach programme at KwaMashu township’s F section

earlier this month. Known as “Isibhedlela Kubantu (Healthcare to the People), the programme delivers health services closer to the people, and today saw the elderly residents receive various Christmas goodies. No fewer than 350 people were examined by healthcare professionals for various ailments on the day.

Addressing those in attendance, MEC Simelane also advised the

elderly not to shy away from exercising; to follow a healthier diet; and avoid food with too much sugar, oil or salt. She urged the elderly to get regular health screening, so as to minimise the risk of experiencing health complications.

The elderly walked away with grocery hampers and assistive devices, including spectacles and walking sticks.



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DOH INTERNS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE THUS FAR



My name is Mbali Phakathi. I am a dietitian, working as an intern under the MCWH and Nutrition Directorate, KZN Department of Health Provincial office.

I started doing my internship in May 2022. I have gained new knowledge on aspects of the integrated nutrition program (INP) as it is implemented from the provincial level. I have learnt to facilitate training as I have first-hand experience facilitating the INP training for nursing tutors. This not only enhanced my facilitation skills but enabled me to learn from my seniors as I sat in whilst they were facilitating other sections. I have learnt to provide support and mentorship to the community service dietitians placed in KZN. This was done through regular review of their reports and ongoing follow-ups on planned actions. Virtual Mentorship & Support was conducted particularly for those without a permanent dietitian supervisor.

I have played a role in conducting summative assessments for the severe acute malnutrition online course. As malnutrition is a public health problem and contributes to childhood deaths, this course is critical in transferring knowledge on the WHO ten steps on inpatient management of SAM, thus preventing deaths due to modifiable factors. During this period, I have gained experience conducting integrated nutrition support visits to PHC clinics and hospitals. This experience has sharpened my skills on critical thinking, as some interventions are immediate, and troubleshooting and technical advice is required on-site at the time of the visit. Additionally, through these support visits, I have acquired skills to present verbal feedback to various managers and staff. The INP support visits have enhanced my report-writing skills, as all visits are followed up by a written report.



My name is Lungiswa Mtolo, I am an Intern under Human Resources Management. I started doing my internship under Service Conditions (Leave Section).

I learned about the types of leaves, claims and the overtime claims. I also learned on how to processing of leave balance on annual basis. I've learned much I'll be glad if you can give us the opportunity to attend the Course (Persal Control Course)

The Head office staff treat us very good they are so professional I applaud them.

I am now moved to Financial Disclosure. There's nothing much in this section, we do verifications of qualifications and other things I am still learning I don't have clear understanding in this section for now.

I am still learning.

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My name is Nikita Ntombela, I am an IT Intern under the Department of Health KZN.

I've had quite a rollercoaster of an experience working as an intern. Every day comes with its own challenges - from users having issues with the network to others not being able to send emails or even print etc.

The Department of Health has given me a lot of practical experience because every day you attend to a new user, with a new technical issue and that adds to your knowledge and grows you as an IT intern.



My name is Sneziwe Buthelezi. I am a Journalism intern under the Communications department.

The growth I've gained thus far in this department is being able to work under pressure and I have learnt that nothing is impossible if you put your mind in to something.

At the Communications department, we mostly work outside of the office which is a 'normal' life of a journalist and in my experience thus far it has been so much fun and I have been learning a lot of things as a junior journalist, how to get information from our sources and the manner of approach on getting a particular story cover.

This has always been something I've pictured myself doing or being a part of, it has boosted my confidence in so many ways as I am a shy person. I have personally evolved within the department as I was facing challenged that required me to get out of my comfort zone and be hands on and allow my mind and body to be proactive.

I am yet to gain and learn more from the opportunity I have been granted.

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