



# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

## CORPORATE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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## ATTACKS ON PARAMEDIC CREWS IN KZN

As the festive season looms the Provincial Department of Health's Emergency Medical Rescue Services is pulling all stops to ensure that Emergency Medical Care is at hand for the people of this province. The department has launched Alpha Operation, which means an extra number of paramedics and emergency vehicles will be deployed to strategic points on the main roads throughout the province. To ensure full preparedness for any eventuality the department has gone as far as deploying 48 more ambulances, 12 rescue units, 12 mass casualty buses, 12 additional advanced life-support vehicles, two helicopters and one fixed-wing plane.

But all this will be of no use if paramedics continue to fear for their lives every time they are dispatched on an emergency. Recently there has been a spate of attacks on ambulance crews and the hijacking of ambulances. Last month an ambulance was stolen in Umkhanyakude District in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. On Tuesday, 6 December 2005 two ambulance crews were assaulted when they responded to a call in Northdale, Pietermaritzburg. The ambulance was stoned, the windows and tyres were damaged. Last night (7 December 2005) two paramedics were hijacked at N section Umlazi, in Durban. The paramedics were assaulted and stripped of their uniforms and were abandoned in the bush.

The MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal, Mrs. Peggy Nkonyeni has appealed to the public to report such incidents to police or call the Provincial Health Operation Centre on 0800005133. "We are concerned that during this time of the year Emergency Medical Rescue Services could be left with no operational units as a result of such incidents. This can put a life of someone who is really in need of emergency medical assistance in danger because our paramedics are called out to hoax emergencies and this really affects the morale of our staff. They go out to save our lives we should allow them do their job without fear or hindrance," said the MEC.



She added, "I would like to urge parents and all grown-ups to teach children about making a hoax call can endanger the lives of people who are genuinely in need of swift medical care. Making a hoax call is a criminal offence and the department is set on catching the culprits."

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact Mr. Kholekile Ntsohi on 083 381 3390 or Lindiwe Khuzwayo on 083 393 9943.**