
TO: ALL MEDIA
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EMBARGO: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KZN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO THE RESCUE THIS FESTIVE SEASON **(150 brand – new ambulances to be released)**

As the festive season is looming and the Provincial Department of Health is gearing up to deal with any medical emergency eventuality from giving emergency care to car accident victims to rescue operations. A fleet of 150 brand-new ambulances to the tune of R45 million will be released **tomorrow (Tuesday, 5 December 2006)** at a function that will be officiated by Premier Sbu Ndebele and Provincial Health MEC, Peggy Nkonyeni.

The release of these new ambulances is part of the Alpha Operations programme, which the department embarks over the holiday period. The aim of this operation is to pull together and strengthen all emergency medical rescue services and resources throughout the province. "During this festive period the department will have a total of 200 emergency vehicles operating and on top of that we will have an additional 53 ambulances and 11 medical emergency disaster buses and rescue vehicles," says the MEC for Health Mrs. Peggy Nkonyeni.

The department also has two helicopters one stationed in Richards Bay to provide aero-medical care in northern KwaZulu-Natal and another based in Durban, "We also have a fixed wing plane for the transfer of emergency," said Nkonyeni.

The Alpha Operation launch will also include the passing out parade of a group of 84 emergency care practitioners (paramedics) who have successfully completed a three months training course in Basic Life Support. This training is part of the recruitment programme initiated by the department to train unemployed matriculants from previously disadvantaged backgrounds who are employed by the department under the Emergency Medical Rescue Services (EMS) after successfully completing training.

The Alpha Operation launch programme will start at, 08h00 at the Mariannahill Toll Plaza where the Premier, MEC, the Head of Department and senior officials from the Road Traffic Inspectorate will be handing out educational pamphlets on health and safety during the festive period and also urge motorists to be vigilant and cautious at all times to help minimize road accidents.

The release of the new fleet of ambulances and the passing out parade will take place at the Royal Showgrounds in Pietermaritzburg at 10h00.

TRANSPORT FOR MEDIA HAS BEEN ARRANGED AND WILL DEPART FROM THE DURBAN PLAYHOUSE AT 07H30 AM.

ENDS

For more information please contact Leon Mbangwa on 083 459 8695