

TO: ALL MEDIA  
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**Media Statement: MEC Dhlomo urges community leaders to help stop the killing of ambulance attendants**

MEC Dhlomo convened his first public engagement in Newcastle where he called on community leaders, present, to go back to their communities and make a call for the protection of ambulance attendants. He further presented the health status of the people of KwaZulu-Natal and announced infrastructure projects that have been completed.

“In August we will be receiving a fleet of 159 extra ambulances which will be distributed to all districts. Of course, we may not be able to meet the shortest but that problem is compounded when our ambulance attendants cannot freely go out to provide emergency medical care because they fear for their lives,” MEC Sibongiseni Dhlomo told a packed hall of communities leaders in Newcastle.

In the first semester of 2011, the department has lost two ambulance attendants who were killed in the line of duty. In April 43 years old, Mr. Thulani Mkhize, who was shot to death while transporting a patient. He lost his struggle for life on the operating theater a few hours later. In May, the MEC attended a funeral of Mr. Michael Mazibuko (44) who was called to assist his crew mates at an incident in Rosedale (Escourt) where a perpetrator had stabbed his own parents. On arrival at the scene and whilst assessing one of the patients’ he was attacked and stabbed several times and died instantly.

There has been a number of hijackings and assault as well as intimidation (23 between April and June) cases of ambulance attendants while caring for the ill.

The meeting is part of the MEC’s District visits that he is undertaking to mobilize communities for better health outcomes. It is part of the department’s effort to mobilize communities and all sectors in the delivery of quality healthcare.

The MEC provided the meeting with the current health status which highlights that KwaZulu-Natal is leading in a number of diseases especially TB, HIV and AIDS. He announced a number of infrastructure developments in the Districts such as the completed Madadeni Hospital and Newcastle mortuaries. He further announced a number of clinics to be completed including the hand-over of a construction site for the Madadeni unit 7 clinic on Friday 22 July 2011.

ENDS

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KWAZULU-NATL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH