

KZN Department of Health urges holidaymakers and revellers to stay safe and enjoy themselves responsibly

December 16, The Day of Reconciliation, also marks the official start of the peak holiday season. As in every year, thousands of visitors have already begun descending on the province of KwaZulu-Natal for the Festive Season.

The holidaymakers include thousands of school children from all over KZN and beyond.

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 in public and engaging in unprotected sex. However, adults have also been known to behave recklessly.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health is therefore calling upon all visitors and the people of KwaZulu-Natal to enjoy the festive season responsibly by among others, ensure that they don't drive under the influence of alcohol and drugs; and engage on unprotected sex.

In a joint statement, KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and provincial Health Head of Department Dr Sibongile Zungu said: "We would like to appeal to all holidaymakers to make the most of our beautiful province during this period and enjoy themselves. However, we call upon them to do so responsibly and without contravening the law. This not only applies to the youth, but to adults as well. Our message to them is, '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.'"

Visitors and people of KwaZulu-Natal are urged to help the province in its efforts to reduce the burden of diseases which among others, include, violence, injury and trauma; and the spread of HIV/AIDS and TB infections.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health wishes a safe and enjoyable Festive Season, a Merry Christmas to all Christians and a Happy and prosperous New Year to all.

Beach Safety:

Many people will be heading to the beach during the holidays and it's easy to get excited and forget about safety. If you're planning a trip to the beach this holiday, go through some water safety tips with everyone in your family and make sure they stick to them. Use the following guide as a start to your holiday on the beach this season:

Drowning is a leading cause of accidental death among children in South Africa. How can you prevent drowning?

- Knowing how to swim is an important skill that everyone should have. Find out from your local council if there are services offering free swimming lessons.
- Swim with a buddy - Swim with someone who is a good swimmer.
- Never go into deep water unless you are an experienced swimmer.
- Swim where lifeguards are on duty just in case anything happens.
- Bathers are urged to swim within designated bathing areas, marked with red and yellow flagged beacons. Swimming hours are from 06h00 to 18h30 and swimming at night is dangerous as there are no lifeguards on duty then.

- Swim or take part in water sports when you are alert, never when you're sleepy or have used drugs or alcohol.
- Keep a look out for your friends - If you're a good swimmer but your friends aren't, make sure they know their limits, and keep an eye on them in the water.
- Don't drink & swim – drinking alcohol (or using drugs) dramatically increases the risk of injury – especially when diving.
- If a large wave approaches you and there is not enough time to get away from it, try to dive underneath the wave. Keep your body as low as possible until the wave passes over you.
- Never leave a young child unattended near water and do not trust a child's life to another child; teach children to always ask permission to go near water.
- If a child is missing, check the water first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- Steer clear of animal life like jellyfish and stingrays.
- Be wise and remember, Water is dangerous – even if you know how to swim.

Road Safety:

If you are traveling during this Festive Season, the following tips from Government's Alive Arrive programme may come in handy:

- 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 a rested.
- Do not drink and drive.
- Try to recognize 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 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 not to be as obedient to the law as yourself.
- Avoid distractions on the road such as texting, conversations on cellular phones.
- Be courteous towards fellow road users - keep your temper and resist the temptation to retaliate – road rage is dangerous.
- Know your emergency numbers - When you need assistance, kindly call the following numbers:
- Ambulance (KZN Emergency Services) – 10177; Police – 10111; Fire Department – 10111; Arrive Alive Call Centre - 0861 400 800.

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health