

6 July 2015

KZN Health MEC launches 95 Newly Purchased Ambulances/Patient Transport Service buses

Statement by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the hand-over of 95, 23 Seater Emergency Medical Service vehicles

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for the very strong and productive relationship that we as a Department have with the South African National Defence Force.

Just yesterday, we worked in conjunction with the SANDF Air Force and the Mountain Club of South Africa to rescue a 30 year-old French national who had been stuck in Drakensberg Mountains since Tuesday.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can proudly state that you will be seeing more such co-operation in future.

As it is, we as the Department of Health, in conjunction with the Office of the Premier, have partnered with the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS) to train young people in various health fields. The initial target beneficiaries will be youth from the Province of KwaZulu-Natal for the first year of operation. However, the project will expand to include beneficiaries from other Provinces under SAMHS.

The partnership will draw on the synergies created by both main partners who currently undertake similar training in the Province.

The aim of the initiative project is to enhance Emergency Medical Service including Maritime Medical, Diving and Rescue Service within the KZN Province. This will be done by educating, training and developing youth in the Province as well as Emergency Medical Officers who are already serving in both the Provincial Government and in the SAMHS.

But the main reason we are here today is to unveil these 95 twenty-three seater buses. As per undertakings made during the Budget Presentation in May this year, we made an announcement that we have purchased Planned Patient Transport buses to supplement those being used by small rural hospitals to refer patients for higher level of care to institutions like Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central; Ngwelezane and Grey's Hospitals.

Patient Transport Services (Non-emergency and Planned Patient Transport) plays a critical role in helping disadvantaged people access health services across the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Indeed it is a service that is not as visible or well-known compared to the Ambulance Service but for many disadvantaged people; it is their lifeline to healthcare facilities. It helps people get the right care, at the right place, at the right time.

The need:

This Non-emergency but Planned Patient Transport helps patients with non-acute conditions to travel to or from health facilities.

It plays a crucial role in helping patients that have no other means of transport but have already entered the health care system and its provision is in line with the National Health Insurance (universal access) to health.

The ageing population and an increase in chronic health conditions are the major drivers of the current and future demand of this service.

A need has also been identified in the lack of transportation of Male Medical Circumcision candidates to hospitals and back to their originating locations

They have also been provided to curb the defaulter rate for those Tuberculosis patients who need to be taken to facilities

We have also realised that the demand will continue to grow also due to the demographic pressures and the placement of specialists within the health care facilities; i.e., Inkosi Albert and Greys Hospitals.

The plan:

We have now identified and established HUBs for minor and main pathways that make it possible for patients to access various collection points where they would be fetched from and dropped off either within (intra) or outside (inter) the district.

The latest addition is the UThukela Hub that will address patients referred to Madadeni Hospital and the Districts of Zululand and UMzinyathi.

They are in addition to those already in existence 3 Districts namely; UThungulu District for Ngwelezane Hospital; UMgungundlovu for Grey's Hospital and EThekwini District for Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital.

Distribution Plan	Districts allocation
Amajuba	7
EThekwini	5
Harry Gwala	4
ILembe	4
Ugu	4
UMgungundlovu	10
UMkhanyakude	8
UMzinyathi	10
UThukela	4
UThungulu	8
Zululand	7
Grey's Hospital Hub (UMgungundlovu, UThukela, Amajuba, UMzinyathi and Zululand)	7
Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital Hub (eThekwini, UGu, Harry Gwala, ILembe and UMgungundlovu)	5
Ngwelezane Hub (UMkhanyakude, UThungulu and Zululand)	7
UThukela Hub (UThukela, Amajuba, UMzinyathi and Zululand)	1
College Of Emergency Care	1
Total	95

Indeed, with this allocation, we hope to alleviate the patient waiting times; appropriately manage patient movement; and also address the problems of patients going astray due to non-supervision and hand over processes at the referral hospitals.

To ensure both the safety of our patients and the longevity of the vehicles, we will continue with the Defensive Driver Training Courses that we conduct for our drivers.



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and Head of Department Dr Sifiso Mtshali



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and General Manager of EMS, Nkateko Sithole



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, Head of Department Dr Sifiso Mtshali and Nkateko Sithole inspect one of the PTS buses.



KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo congratulates Caleb Wang from Emergency Medical Services. Wang is one of the people who was involved in the rescuing of a French hiker who had been stuck at Mweni Northern Drakensberg Mountain since Tuesday.



KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, gives the thumbs up at the launch of the 95 twenty-three seater PTS buses.