

MEC Dhlomo launches 89 brand new ambulances to replace ageing fleet

28 August 2018

The 89 brand new ambulances that were unveiled in Durban today will improve government's ability to come to the aid of people in emergency situations within the "golden hour" - including in far-flung areas where the terrain is rough.

This is according to KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, who presented the brand new fleet of ambulances to the province's 11 health districts.

Speaking at the launch, outside Durban's Moses Mabhida Stadium, MEC Dhlomo thanked Emergency Medical Services staff for the immense role that they play in the health value chain. He also urged the public to look after these ambulances and respect the emergency crews who use them to bring life-saving healthcare to people in distress.

"Our province is home to more than 10,5 million people, which amounts to 21% of the population of the country. At least 80% of these people depend on public health sector for their medical and health needs.

Our Emergency Medical Service is the largest in the country, operating more than 300 ambulances and having more than 2 500 dedicated paramedics in its employ.



When it comes to our ability to respond to incidents of violence, injuries and trauma as a Department, paramedics play a profoundly critical role in saving lives. They are usually the first healthcare professionals to arrive at the scene of accident or a homestead of a sick patient and quickly assess the situation and determine the proper course of action for that individual.

It therefore becomes crucial for paramedics to get to the scene of an emergency as close to this "Golden Hour" as possible. This is the first hour after a traumatic injury, when emergency treatment is most likely to be successful.

"Due to the vastness of our province and the rough terrain of some of our roads, our vehicles accumulate high mileage very quickly, which means that they are subject to extraordinary wear and tear, and reach their sell-by date (250 000km) very quickly.

"They constantly need to be repaired and in some cases replaced. And because replacing them does not come cheap, we are sometimes forced to soldier on and continue using them even when they have reached that replacement threshold.

But we are pleased to be handing over 89 ambulances, which are fully equipped to an Intermediate Life Support level, and are in line with the new EMS regulations. They will be distributed to all 11 districts to complement the existing operational fleet. We see investments in new Ambulances as a means to enhance the working environment for this sector whose nature of work is characterised by emergency and urgency.” The breakdown of the new ambulances is as follows:

- 36 Mercedes Benz Sprinter converted to ambulances
- 35 VW Crafters converted to ambulances;
- 18 Toyota Hilux pick up vans converted to all terrain ambulances.

District	Breakdown per vehicle brand		
	Merc	VW	Toyota
Amajuba	2	1	2
eThekwini	8	4	0
Harry Gwala	3	3	2
Ilembe	3	3	1
Ugu	4	2	2
Umgungundlovu	4	3	2
Umkhanyakude	2	3	3
Umzinathi	2	2	2
King Cetshwayo	2	5	2
Uthukela	2	6	0
Zululand	4	3	2
Total	36	35	18

Important information about EMS

- Each of the 11 health districts have an Emergency Management Centre where emergency calls are received, triaged (the calls are placed on order of medical priority, not first come, first serve) and then an ambulance is dispatched to the case.
- The control rooms play a critical role as this is where the emergencies are co-ordinated.
- KZN EMS can be contacted by dialling 10177

Advice to the public when phoning any emergency number:

- Give full details of the reason for calling the emergency number (there has been a car accident etc.)
- Answer all the questions you are asked;
- Do not exaggerate the extent of the emergency;
- Do not hesitate to give a phone number that you can be contacted back on;
- Provide clear and exact directions to where the emergency is.