

**Media Statement by KZN Health MEC, Neliswa Nkonyeni on the
launch of the alpha Operation for 2006 Festive season
05 Dec 06**

With the festive season upon us, the Provincial Department of Health is gearing up to deal with any medical emergency eventuality, that is, from giving emergency care to car accident victims to rescue operations.

We are today showcasing a total number of **150 brand-new ambulances to the tune of R45 million** that will be distributed in all parts of our province. These Ambulances will be visible in all major routes of the province, including the rural areas. 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.

Working in conjunction with the Department of Transport, we intend making this festive season one of the safest in years. They will ensure that road users including pedestrians respect the laws and we will make it a point that those in distress get qualified health so as to decrease the number of people that waste on the roadside.

To further strengthen our emergency medical rescuer efforts, the Department 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 cases.

Today we are also parading and releasing 83 qualified Emergency Medical Practitioners to join our disciplined and committed team.

These young men and women will no doubt assist in the realization of the broad aims of the emergency Medical Rescue Services that are:

- to provide an emergency medical and rescue,
- non emergency [elective] transport, and
- disaster management to all the citizens of the Province of KwaZulu Natal.

Our concern remains the response times in which we are able to reach people in distress. With all the Ambulance acquisition we make, we are striving for the attainment of the national set norm of **one Ambulance per 10 000 population.**

We look at this campaign as an ongoing concern and as such we have commitment from our Chief Financial Officer to release a further **R8 million for the recruitment, training and employment of more than 500 Paramedics.**

This exercise is part of the recruitment programme initiated by the department to train unemployed matriculants from previously disadvantaged backgrounds who are then employed by the department under the Emergency Medical Rescue Services

(EMRS) after successfully completing training. The 500 post have to be filled before the end of the current financial year by those who:

- Are unemployed.
- Have passed grade 12 [matriculation qualification]
- Have a valid Code 10 drivers licence,
- Have a valid PDP [public drivers permit]
- Are willing to undertake and sign a contract with the department.
- Have an ability to communicate in isiZulu.

All these efforts are aimed at providing a better health for the citizens and visitors of our beautiful province.

Help us by acting responsible during this festive season and beyond.