

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of a pass out parade and graduation of new EMRS recruits.

4 December 2007

MEC for Transport, colleague, Bheki Cele
Chairperson of the Health Portfolio Committee, Mama Ludidi
Chairperson of the Transport portfolio Committee, Omie Singh
Members of the Provincial Legislature
Head of Department, Health, Dr Yoliswa Mbhele
Head of Department, Transport, Mr C. Hlabisa
Road Traffic Inspectorate Manager, Mr John Schell
Senior Government officials
EMRS Senior Management
Bazali bama Students esiwakhiphayo namhlanje
Esizengabo, our Graduates
All protocol observed

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 **20 brand new ambulances** to the tune of **R5 868 720** 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 medical rescuers efforts, the Department has **two helicopters, one stationed in Richards Bay to provide aero – medical in northern KwaZulu-Natal and another based in Durban.**

We also have a fixed wing plane for the transfer of emergency cases.

This year sees the graduation and pass out parade of the 6th cohort of new recruits. The *programme commenced in 2005*

and the College of Emergency Care has since produced 210 BLS practitioners through this programme.

It is the responsibility of every organisation in the country, whether a public sector, private sector or NGO to promote poverty alleviation and human capital development. We as the Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal have not renegaded on our responsibility to contribute towards these two national prerogatives.

It has been our great honour to identify young men and woman with the ability to succeed and to give them a chance to pursue a career in the field of emergency medical and rescue services.

By giving these young men and woman the opportunity, not only have we strengthened the workforce of EMRS but we have strengthened you, the successful recruits to become pillars in your community.

We need you not only to perform your duties whilst on duty in your ambulances but we need you to educate and empower your communities even when you are not on duty.

- Educate the children on road safety,
- Educate the youth of the community on HIV and AIDS.
- The key to health is awareness and you can all play an integral role.

The recruit programme has been an immense success. These **210 practitioners** are now employed and proudly serving the emergency medical needs of our citizens.

The true success of the programme is seen in the fact that we are producing a new caliber of emergency care practitioner. Some of the graduates of the first programme have already qualified at the level of **Intermediate Life Support** and some have already accessed and will be accessing the **Mid level Worker Programme**. It is anticipated that in two years time these graduates will access tertiary education.

This development and upward mobility is a sign of the success of the programme.

EMRS is a rapidly changing profession. This relatively young profession has gone from its inception stages to the childhood stage onto puberty stage and is now emerging as a reputable and respectable profession.

As the graduates of the Basic Life Support programme you are now entering this profession with the world as your oyster. Regard your service as an opportunity to add value in the quest to give a better life for our people.

Be professionally and psychologically prepared to venture into hostile terrains to reach the sick, injured and pregnant people who are in need of accessing medical health care.

Always put forward the plight and anguish of those who solely rely on your expertise and service in order to reach the health facilities. We thus expect you to:

- Carry out your profession with pride and dignity.
- Serve the population with professionalism and care.
- Let your decisions be guided by the principles of Batho Pele, that says:
 1. serve the public in an unbiased and impartial manner in order to create confidence in the health service;
 2. be polite and helpful when dealing with the public and treat them as customers who are entitled to receive high standards of service;
 3. have regard for the concerns and circumstances of the public when making decisions;
 4. be committed to the development and upliftment of all South Africans

If you stick with this advice you can be assured of a long and illustrious career with the Department.

Again, we want to say congratulation to you for having shown commitment to serve our people. We also take this opportunity to thank all the EMRS management for selecting and producing the caliber of personnel that is ever prepared to serve beyond the call of duty.

Dear graduates, please be encouraged to use our Wellness-centre facilities as a way of dealing with the stress that comes as part and parcel of our duties as we tend the traumatized, the sick and the frail.

Masibathandeni abantu bakithi, sibahlenge ngendlela uma besosizini.

I thank you.