

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the commemoration of EMRS members who died whilst on duty in the past 3 years in area that includes Amajuba; uMzinyathi and uThukela Districts

3 May 2013

Abefundisi kanye namakholwa asizimazisile

KZN Health Head of Dept. – Dr Sibongile Zungu

Respected members of the Provincial Health Council

UThukela District Mayor- Cllr Dudu Mazibuko

Local Municipal Mayors and Councillors

Senior Officials from Government Departments

Representatives from the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC)

Representatives from South African Police Services (SAPS)

Representatives from South African Military Health Services (SAMHS)

Representatives from Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI)

Imindeni kanye nezihlobo azalahlekelwa

Members of the Media

EMS Management and staff

Esteemed Guests

Inkosi iphile; Inkosi ithathile, malihlonishwe Igama layo.

As we pay homage to all the 64 Emergency Medical Services personnel we have lost since 2011 here in Area 3; 28 at uThukela; 20 at Amajuba and 16 at uMzinyathi, I deem it necessary that at the very beginning of my message on this solemn occasion that we all rise and recite the **PARAMEDIC PLEDGE AND OATH:**

Be it pledged as an Emergency Care Personnel, I will honour the physical and judicial laws of God and man.

I will not follow that regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of patients and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, nor shall I suggest any such counsel.

Into whatever homes I enter, I will go into them for the benefit of only the sick and injured, never revealing what I see or hear in the lives of men unless required by law.

I shall also share my medical knowledge with those who may benefit from what I have learned. I will serve unselfishly and continuously in order to help make a better world for all mankind.

While I continue to keep this oath unviolated; may it be granted to me to enjoy life, and the practice of the art, respected by all men, in all times,

Should I trespass or violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot.

So help me God.

Ladies and gentlemen and fellow compatriots; as we commemorate the lives of the colleagues who passed on, I would like us all to appreciate the fact that Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a core service delivery unit within our Department and that it is at the front line of health service delivery.

The broad aims of this Service, are twofold and entail the following:

- **Emergency Patient Transport**, which includes inter-facility transfers and emergency response to public for, stabilization of, and transportation of patients, involved in trauma, medical emergencies, maternal and other emergencies through the utilization of specialized vehicles, equipment and skilled Emergency Care practitioners.
- **Patient Transport Services**, which includes non-emergency referrals between hospitals and hospitals and clinics to hospitals for indigent persons with no other means of transport.

I am glad that the families are with us today because here we are going to tabulate and emphasise the good and difficult work that is performed by the Emergency Medical Services.

Let us first understand that one of the core outcomes of government is to ensure “a long and healthy life for all South Africans” and that has to be achieved and measured in four specific areas which are:

- **Improve life expectancy**
- **Improve mother and child health and survival**
- **Reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS and TB**

- **Improve health system effectiveness**

Emergency Medical Services as one of the three core pillars in health service delivery standing alongside primary health care (PHC) and hospital services is thus crucial in the attainment of the above.

The paramedics are our first point of entry as they are medical professionals who provide medical care to patients en route to hospitals or other medical facilities.

They are the first on the scene of an accident where they are expected to quickly assess the situation and determine the proper course of action for each patient.

They accompany the patient to the hospital or medical facility making sure that the patient maintains his or her condition of stability during the ambulance ride.

They are trained to drive what is in effect a mobile emergency clinic and to resuscitate and or stabilise patients using sophisticated techniques, equipment and drugs.

The doctors and nurses at hand over hospitals rely and depend on their report in as far as the condition in which the patient was found and also medical attention already given.

They work shifts, including evenings and weekends, going out in all weather conditions and terrains.

The holiday season to them is never a time of joy as they have to be away from their families dealing with road carnages and the people who

mercilessly maim each other when under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Our health care workers are also left psychologically scared and traumatised by all the blood and broken limbs they have to deal with.

Last but not least; our paramedics are an unarmed para-military unit that at times have to deal with patients' relatives who are in most cases hysterical and worse, in mob situations, deal with people who are aggressive and baying for blood of the patient of the one coming to offer assistance.

As we thank them, we again repeat that the salaries that we offer them can never equal the enormous work they do. Their reward as we pray may be with the Lord.

This applies to all the people in this noble and chosen profession that extols on all of us to take an Oath just like **Nurses pledge** upon resuming their duties:

'The total health of my patients will be my first consideration'

The Doctors have to commit as well through the **Hippocratic Oath** in which they declare:

'I will treat without exception all who seek my ministrations, so long as the treatment of others is not compromised thereby, and I will seek the counsel of particularly skilled physicians where indicated for the benefit of my patient.'

I WILL FOLLOW that method of treatment which according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patient and abstain from whatever is harmful or mischievous."

Our reference to EMS as a para-military service directs me again to the **Code of Conduct of the SANDF** that emphasises discipline in all its operations, where it says:

- I accept personal responsibility for my actions.
- I will treat all people fairly and respect their rights and dignity at all times, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, language and sexual orientation.
- I will report criminal activity, corruption and misconduct to the appropriate authority.
- I will strive to improve the capabilities of the service by maintaining discipline, safeguarding property, developing skills and knowledge, and performing my duties diligently and professionally.

In remembrance of all the departed, I thus implore all the serving members of EMS to observe and enhance discipline, respect and team work and also ensure patriotic approach to their work. Always heed what we agreed upon in project Bring Back Order.

Also allow us to say to all of you present and to all those serving at various points as we speak, thank you for all of your dedication, time, skills and commitment. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed or unacknowledged, thank you once again and keep up the fantastic work.

To all the family members who lost their loved ones and to the EMS personnel who still miss their departed colleagues, please find solace in the **Prayer of St. Francis**, which reads:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love, Where there is injury, pardon, Where there is doubt, faith, Where there is despair, hope, Where there is darkness, light, And where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled...For it is in giving, That we receive, It is in pardoning That we are pardoned, And it is in dying That we are born to eternal life."

May the Almighty Lord be our Guide

I thank you