

NADINE FORD-KRITZINGER
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TRANSPORT and public works MEC Donald Grant yesterday announced that there had been a spike in road deaths over the past festive season.

There had also been an increase in driver and passenger fatalities.

The festive season, measured from December 1 to January 31, saw a 6% increase in overall fatalities up from 248 to 268.

Increases were recorded in the number of driver deaths which was up from

‘Road fatalities increased over festive season’

39 to 57 and passenger deaths which were up from 74 to 82.

Pedestrian deaths, which are the leading category in road deaths in the province and an area of focus for various interventions, saw a 7% decrease from 111 deaths in 2016/ 2017, to 104 deaths in 2017/ 2018.

“Of the total 262 fatalities recorded at this past festive season, most were

recorded in the Cape Town metropole area,” Grant said.

“The department’s awareness initiatives are specifically targeted at areas where the most incidents occur.”

Last year’s festive season had been one of the most challenging, with traffic officers having to contend with various operational difficulties including high

traffic volumes, congestion and erratic driver behaviour.

Thousands of vehicles flooded the province as holiday makers made their way to various destinations around the province.

“Amid all the activity, the dedicated and hard-working provincial and municipal traffic services, safety teams and all road safety partners were hard at

work to make our roads safer over this notoriously dangerous time,” Grant said.

As with all busy holiday periods, one of the main factors that authorities must watch out for was the scourge of drinking and driving – and drinking and walking around – which made it clear that alcohol and road use simply did not mix, as is evidenced by the significant

role that alcohol continued to play in a majority of crashes on the roads, he said.

The consumption of alcohol, even in relatively small amounts, “increased the risk” of being involved in a crash for motorists and pedestrians.

Not only does alcohol impair processes critical to safe road use such as vision and reaction time, it is also associated with poor judgment and so is often linked to other high-risk road use behaviour such as speeding or not using seat belts, Grant said.

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