

## Launch of the Johannesburg Metropole department alcohol evidence test centre

09 December 2009

Speech by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the launch of the Johannesburg Metropole department alcohol evidence test centre, Dube vocational centre, Dube, Soweto – Johannesburg

Programme Director, it is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to share this day with you and to be part of this very important event – the launch of the Alcohol Evidence Test Centre.

Johannesburg's drive to make our City's roads safer for residents and visitors is being intensified. As our experience in law enforcement grows JMPD is increasingly making use of state-of-the-art technology to support their daily vigilance against those who break the law.

The role of alcohol in road accidents and road fatalities can no longer be denied. Alcohol, almost always combined with speed and reckless driving is the single biggest cause of deaths on our roads.

Through the years we have been engaged in numerous information and communication campaigns. We have sought to inform road users of the deadly consequences of drinking and driving.

We still have a long way to go. The statistics do, however, show that these campaigns are making a dent, that some progress is being made.

Yes we must talk, raise levels of awareness and educate as many people as possible. But that is not enough. Sweet talking and pleading with motorists not to drink and drive must be backed up with stronger law-enforcement, better technology and an absolute commitment to follow-up cases through to the end.

There is an Afrikaans saying that "as jy nie wil hoor nie, dan moet jy voel." "If you don't want to listen, you must feel." And I think this sums up the City of Johannesburg's approach to drinking and driving.

Programme Director, please let me state this clearly today:

We are sick and tired of motorists who think they will get away with

driving under the influence and only receive a slap on the wrist when they are caught.

We are sick and tired of people who think that drunk driving and speeding on our roads are minor offences that should be treated lightly.

We are sick and tired of people who think they can buy their way of the criminal justice system by paying a fine and then just recommit offence after offence.

We are sick and tired of individuals and organisations that spend their entire days helping people to find loopholes in the law to escape the punishment they deserve for committing traffic offences. In my opinion that is aiding and abetting criminals.

We are sick and tired of clever campaigns where the media is used to denigrate our law enforcement officials and their efforts to make our roads safer.

If there are loopholes in the law, we will close them. If we need better legislation and by-laws, we will so draft them. If our officers need better equipment and better technology, we will provide these to them. If they require specialist training, they will receive it.

But in the end, I can assure you, that the City of Johannesburg is determined to act against irresponsible roads users who exceed the speed limit and who drive while intoxicated and then try and find technical points to escape punishment.

The Drager System that we are rolling out today is part of this campaign to close the net on drunk drivers. In recent months JMPD also introduced a number of other technologies to make our roads safer such as Speed and Red Light Law Enforcement and Smart Roadblocks with automatic number plate recognition.

The use of the intoximetre as evidence in measuring the alcohol content of an offender has been legalised for many years. JMPD has now packaged the process in a "clinic type environment".

The old system of drawing blood took up to eighteen (18) months to finalise. With the Dräger Machine the time has been cut to three (3) days.

We will now have the test results of an offender within three days of his arrest, ready for the prosecuting team to start with the case in court.

Programme Director, it is encouraging to see that the communities and various stakeholders stand four square behind us. That all of us are putting people at the centre of addressing this scourge.

The business community has also thrown its weight behind our road safety campaigns. We are receiving significant support from Business Against Crime and its members. The South African Insurance Association who, like us, have a vested interest in bringing down the accident rate on our roads are equally keen that this challenge should be addressed.

Today, we have South African Breweries (SAB) which is sponsoring this alcohol testing centre. SAB is a valued and responsible corporate citizen with a long and very productive relationship with the City of Johannesburg. Your campaigns to make people aware of the dangers inherent in drinking and driving are well-known and today you are making another tangible contribution to our efforts. This may sound like a contradiction. But across the world there are many companies similar to SAB that have been engaged in campaigns that promote responsible behaviour and safety. If countries like Britain that consume far more alcohol and have far more cars on their roads experience less accidents and negative behaviour surely we can do better.

Our campaign is not against the responsible use of alcohol. It is not intended to put a damper on people's ability to enjoy the festive season with friends and family. All we are saying is: if you have had a drink, do not get behind the wheel of a vehicle. If you had a drink, stay off our roads. As we get close to the end of the year it is customary to thank people for their contribution to make our City, Johannesburg, a better place to live.

Today I would like to extend my appreciation to the MMC for Public Safety, to the Chief of Police and his senior colleagues and to every member of the JMPD.

I trust that you will have an enjoyable time in the company of family and friends. But this year, in 2009, there is a "sting in the tail" to my festive message: "If you drink and drive you will be caught".

The City of Johannesburg wishes all of you a peaceful Festive Season and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Thank you.

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