

The handover of new ambulances to the City by Fleet Africa

09 December 2009

Speech by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, at the handover of new ambulances to the city by Fleet Africa, Mandela bridge, Braamfontein – Johannesburg

Programme Director, it is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to share this day with you and be part of this very important event – the handover of ten (10) ambulances to the City by Fleet Africa.

This project brings us a step closer to our aim of improving the quality of life of our people in general and the safety of the residents of Johannesburg in particular.

The addition of ten (10) ambulances to the fleet of Johannesburg's Emergency Management Services will enable the City to strengthen both the important service of removal and transfer of patients during this festive season.

Programme Director, we believe that it will take the community, private sector, organisations of civil society and government partnerships to significantly impact on Emergency Management Services. Yes, government can achieve so much, but much, much more can be achieved through partnerships with stakeholders.

So, our sincere appreciation goes out to Fleet Africa. We are proud of our association with this community inclined company.

So, this handover is another good example of how the private sector can work together with the City in finding solutions for challenges that confront our residents on a daily basis. Personally, I have no doubt that these ambulances will go a long way to save lives and to improve the quality of life by ensuring that better services are delivered by our Emergency Management Services.

Emergency Management Services specialists often talk about the “golden hour” , referring to that vital time period where victims of accidents or trauma can be stabilised by trained emergency staff before they are given specialist medical attention. The availability of modern ambulances equipped with the latest medical aid and technology will, no doubt, enable our EMS staff to get to accident scenes quicker and to treat the victims more effectively.

Priority cases will receive the required attention and hospitals will receive accurate information about the vital signs of patients before they arrive for specialist treatment. All in all, these ambulances will help to make Johannesburg a safer and better place to live in.

Programme Director, this is also an opportunity to bring home to our communities and residents the message and the importance of safety and prevention. We hope that these ambulances will not be used that often, simply because we hope that people will not become involved in many accidents or

emergencies. In this regard, one is truly conflicted...

The rate of accidents on our roads is unacceptably high and in the vast majority of cases it is caused by either speed or alcohol – and more often by a combination of these two factors.

We must also take steps to bring down the number of deaths caused by drowning in the City's rivers, streams, dams and swimming pools. Every year we approach the summer season with a feeling of dread because of our concerns that our children will enter water unaccompanied, get into trouble and eventually drown.

The Department of Emergency Management Services is doing good work in informing people about all kinds of safety measures with regards to water, fires, electricity and road safety and the media is a valuable partner in spreading these messages to a wide audience.

The safety of residents and citizens of Johannesburg is of utmost importance. The City runs Safety Awareness Campaigns, which focus on hazards such as water, manholes, roads and electricity cables.

These campaigns are seasonal, around May just before winter we focus on hazards such as paraffin and fires and again in November we focus on hazards such as rivers, swimming pools and thunderstorms, amongst others.

I am sure many of you will agree that, armed, however, with the best intentions alone, without the best co-operation from communities, the City cannot fight fires, drowning, road accidents, successfully. Local involvement is perhaps the single most important aspect of public safety education.

All of us have a responsibility to make a positive contribution regarding road safety and being part of solutions in similar situations. Nothing pains one more than to hear that a colleague, friend, relative, wife or husband, young and old person has just been killed in an accident. We have a responsibility to ensure that we do not become mere casualties or statistics in what could be avoidable. Do not drink and drive, observe the rules of the road and do your best in influencing your friends and others to behave in a way that ensures and enhances safety.

Programme Director, it is, however, in the final analysis, parents that should take responsibility for their children by informing them about the dangers, and by ensuring that they do not wander into dangerous places without supervision and, above all, through their own example of safe and responsible behaviour more can be achieved.

We would like to urge members of the community to report dangerous hazards to the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council on the following telephone number 10177. This number – 10177 – should be used for all emergencies, accidents, fires, drownings, floods and any incident where the services of our emergency staff and vehicles are required.

Remember – 10177.

This number should be on your cell phone and that of your spouse or children. Display it prominently next to your telephone or on the fridge door or close to the entrance of your residence. Use it. It is easy to remember 10177.

Finally, programme director, as we get closer to the end of the year it is time to pay tribute to the sterling work done by our City's emergency services. I want to express my personal appreciation to each and every member, every paramedic, every doctor and nurse, every fireman, every diver, every rescue specialist. You deliver such valuable services to our community and do not always receive the appreciation you deserve.

In the past month alone, there were a number of instances where rescue staff risked their lives by searching for bodies in rivers or dams. The torrential rains in the past few weeks have not made your work any easier. We thank you. You have served and served well.

Thank you

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