

The Weekly

ROAD SAFETY FOR SCHOLARS A GROWING CONCERN

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Putting safety first ... Nozala Intermediate School children make use of their scholar patrol to assist learners to safely cross the road to their school premises.

The Department of Education has identified 140 schools in the province where it will implement scholar patrol training for the current financial year,

Research has revealed that the majority of victims or casualties in road related accidents are learners. It also revealed that the accidents usually occur in the mornings on their way to school or after school.

Parents and guardians expect an accident or death report about their children to be the last thing they receive when they get a call regarding their children who left going to school.

Meanwhile, road safety for learners has become a growing concern, in the wake of the immense traffic on public roads.

Several schools in partnership with the department of education and the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality's (MMM) traffic department have heeded the call to address the concerns and have, as a result, initiated some programmes to ensure safety for learners.

The sad reality however is that a number of incidents continue to surge and many learners have already lost their lives due to road accidents.

The Weekly recently encountered an awful accident where a body of a learner lay lifeless in the middle of the road, after being hit by a car during the early morning traffic rush.

At a later stage, another accident occurred in the same area, leaving one learner dead and the other injured.

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These incidents demonstrate the need to intensify scholar patrols in the Free State. Ayanda Katsi is a teacher at Nozala Intermediate School and he supervises the school's traffic patrolling.

He emphasised that schools need help from the traffic department to ensure safety of learners in the roads.

"Last week two grade 1 children got hit by a car here at Maphisa Street, leaving one child dead and the other injured.

In the past week, another child from a different school died due to a car accident."

He said their concern is that the busy Maphisa Street faces the school's main entrance that the learners use. He said the street has a heavy traffic flow and no speed humps.

The department of education has identified 140 schools in the province where it will implement scholar patrol training for the current financial year, while 200 schools will be identified in the next financial year.

The Road Transport Management Corporation (RTMC) is responsible for the establishment of scholar patrols.

The department has planned a school debate competition called, Participation Education Technique (PET), where learners will identify road safety challenges and find solutions and learner license theory for learners to obtain their licenses.

There will also be junior traffic training centres that will educate primary school learners on road safety.

A number of schools such as Dikwena Secondary School and Falisizwe Secondary School have already been identified for PET while Bloemfontein South and Atlehang Secondary School have been identified for 2013.

The traffic department has also made its own strides in trying to provide some kind of assistance.

"As the city, we always encourage the schools to have structures that regulate traffic. The reality of the situation is that with the current capacity, it becomes a challenge to be visible in all schools that encounter serious traffic flow during peak hours," said MMM spokesperson, Qondile Khedama.

Every month MMM has a transport and traffic committee meeting, comprising of metro planning, traffic and infrastructure services.

Khedama said the committee processes the requests made by schools with regard to scholar patrol. He added that in most instances a request is made by the school and in turn the school must attend training for the school patrols.

"Furthermore, this committee also focuses on road markings, signage, as well as the alterations that should be done on the road adjacent to the schools," said Khedama.

"This is a new Unit and is not yet fully fledged; there are a number of plans and activities that are underway such as traffic campaigns and learner traffic awareness programmes," he said.

According to Khedama research has revealed that the majority of victims or casualties in road related accidents are learners and this usually occurs in the mornings or after class.

He said a number of schools, who encounter road safety challenges, have been identified and are provided with scholar patrol training.

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