



## **LIMPOPO PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA ADDRESSES MEDIA ON FESTIVE SEASON TRAFFIC STATISTICS, STATE OF DISASTER AND STATUS OF THE MARULA FESTIVAL 2026**

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Programme Director

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Members of the media

Good morning! Avuxeni! Thobela! Ndi Matsheloni! Silotshile! Goie More!

We convene once again, recalling that in December of last year, we gathered here to herald the onset of the 2025 festive season through our initiative, the #LimpopoKaDizemba campaign. This campaign, which embraced multiple sectors, including economic development via tourism, transportation and the arts and culture, has showcased Limpopo as a vibrant destination for both local and international visitors. Our province became a hub of activity,

marked by thrilling soccer matches featuring beloved teams like Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, as well as high-profile events such as the #CarlingKnonckoutFinal and #CAFChampions match.

The buzz of the Lekompo Festival as well as the sustainable nature of the Mapungubwe Cultural Festival was felt even beyond our province, bringing in young and old to catch with the vibe of this province.

These occasions not only highlighted our rich cultural tapestry but also served to stimulate our economy, as we witnessed families and visitors flocking to local shopping malls, causing significant traffic congestion in towns such as Giyani, Thohoyandou and Tzaneen just days prior to Christmas. It woke us up to realities that we need to rework spatial planning for these areas to allow for multiple areas of access that would not cause congestions as most of residents are becoming economically well-off, seen in the number of cars that enter these towns.

## 1. FESTIVE SEASON ROAD SAFETY STATISTICS

Today, we take this opportunity to formally present the Festive Season Road Safety Statistics for the period spanning 01 December 2025 to 15 January 2026. It is our goal to share transparent feedback with all key stakeholders, particularly road users, regarding the state of road safety within Limpopo. We firmly believe that this information will allow us to collectively reflect, learn, and enhance our efforts in promoting safer road usage across our province.

We are pleased to report that Limpopo Province achieved a commendable 14% reduction in road crashes and a 10% decline in road fatalities compared to the previous financial year's figures for the same period. Such statistics reflect the efficacy of our committed road safety interventions.

During the festive season of 2025/26, the province documented 125 fatal crashes, a significant decrease from 145 the previous year. Furthermore, 171 fatalities were recorded in 2025/26, down from 190 in 2024/25. Behind these numbers lie the stories of lives saved and families preserved from the anguish associated with road fatalities.

However, we must also confront the unsettling findings of this report. The N1 corridor emerged as the deadliest route during this time, claiming 25 lives. This essential economic thoroughfare demands heightened attention and rigorous enforcement to enhance safety.

The data analysis further confirms that driver behaviour is the predominant factor leading to these tragic incidents, with reckless driving practices - particularly unsafe overtaking - culpable in 115 of these fatalities.

Pedestrian safety represents another significant concern within our province. The statistics reveal that 48 pedestrians lost their lives during this period, many of these incidents classified as hit-and-runs, which reveals a distressing disregard for human life and the law.

Considering our intensified law enforcement during the festive period, 259 motorists were apprehended for driving under the influence of alcohol, while an additional nine (9) were detained for excessive speeding.

Furthermore, we have acted decisively to safeguard public transport passengers by impounding 20 overloaded taxis and buses due to roadworthiness issues and non-compliance with required documentation.

While it is encouraging to witness a decrease in crashes and fatalities, we must remain vigilant and dedicated to our mission. Each life lost on our roads is a tragedy that resonates deeply within our communities. We pledge to further fortify our law enforcement efforts, enhance road safety education, and work collaboratively with road users and stakeholders to continue reducing road-related incidents.

We want to take this moment to express my profound gratitude to our traffic officers, law enforcement agencies, and all partners who have laboured diligently, often under difficult conditions, during the festive season to ensure the safety of our roads. Together, we can achieve a safer Limpopo, not only during festive occasions but throughout the entire year.

Allow me to also take this opportunity to pay condolences to our own David Sejobe, an employee of MultiChoice in Gauteng whose kindness and vhuthu had earned him the status of a national hero. His tragic passing is something that cuts deep and reminds us all the time to keep our roads safe for everyone to use, pedestrians, runners, cyclists and all other road users. As his final remains will be buried in Mukondeni, Makhado Municipality in

Vhembe District this weekend, we send our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the many lives he had touched.

## 2. UPDATE ON STATE OF DISASTER

Turning to a pressing matter, we would like to update the public on the current disaster situation affecting various areas of our province. Recent adverse weather conditions have resulted in substantial implications for planned public events. Our government, in collaboration with disaster management teams and relevant stakeholders, is actively assessing and responding to the needs of affected communities. Our primary focus remains the safety and wellbeing of residents, which involves ongoing damage assessments, relief interventions and the urgent restoration of essential services.

Over the past weeks, members of the Executive Council, including myself, have visited several flood-affected areas. Just yesterday, we were in Blouberg, in Old Longsine and Inveran where the #DikgerekereWednesdays team had begun the process of restoring access road and regravelling parts which were not accessible. Whilst there we also mourned the loss of five lives since the onset of the rains in December, and many households have been displaced.

The crisis extends to critical infrastructure; for instance, the R521 highway from Polokwane to Mogwadi (Dendron) now reflects the severe impact of the rains, riddled with hazardous potholes. Consequently, we are actively engaging with the South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL)

to expedite repairs on this and other critical routes to ensure the safety of our communities.

It is clear to us that Limpopo requires a comprehensive overhaul to restore normalcy to the lives of our residents. We welcome the national declaration of these floods as a disaster, which has enabled access to much-needed assistance from national departments. Many have already initiated processes to support our recovery efforts.

Since December 2025, we have experienced tragic losses, with 27 fatalities reported thus far, alongside approximately 3,194 houses affected and around 439 roads rendered unusable, measuring an estimated 600 kilometres. In response, our provincial government has allocated R800 million towards recovery efforts while we await the response from the National Disaster Management Centre. Preliminary assessments indicate that we may require close to R10 billion for comprehensive recovery initiatives.

We remain hopeful that we will successfully rebuild Limpopo from this disaster with the resources we are beginning to mobilise while we await further intervention from the National Disaster Management Centre.

### 3. STATUS OF MARULA FESTIVAL

Lastly, we would like to address the Marula Festival 2026, one of our province's iconic events, which has unfortunately been affected by the recent calamities. Phalaborwa, the intended host, has faced significant challenges,

with key routes leading into the area severely compromised. Key transport routes such as the R40 near Maseke Game Reserve, the R71 between Gravelotte and Phalaborwa, the R36 between Ofcolaco and The Oaks, and the R527 in Hoedspruit have incurred extensive damage. This deterioration has limited access to essential services and disrupted the lives of local residents.

Communities that are essential to the tourism sector have expressed deep concerns, as access issues between Phalaborwa, Hoedspruit, the Phalaborwa Gate of the Kruger National Park and the Blyde River Canyon corridor have resulted in cancellations and reduced visitor activity. The catastrophic damage witnessed at Kambaku Boat Safaris and Lodge for example, along with delays in readiness at venues such as Ba-Phalaborwa Golf and Spa Hotel, has placed immense pressure on this vital economic sector.

Thus, Phalaborwa remains in a sensitive phase of relief and early recovery, where our immediate focus is on restoring dignity, safety and essential services to residents. People of Phalaborwa have been without electricity for weeks, without water for weeks and we recently had to lay to rest two young lives who perished because of the floods. Phalaborwa is still a place of pain

As a result, we have made the difficult yet necessary decision to postpone the build-up activities for the Marula Festival, including the main open-air music festival. We have decided to take all the resources and funds that were aimed at supporting this festival should be re-directed towards rebuilding Ba-

Phalaborwa Municipality. This will be in addition to other funds that we anticipate from the National Disaster Management Centre.

This decision acknowledges the festival's substantial economic impact on the local community; however, it ultimately prioritises the humanitarian needs of our residents over commercial interests. By allowing the community the necessary time to heal and recover, we aim to ensure that when the Marula Festival returns next year, it will do so in a safe and stable environment that the town of Phalaborwa can be proud to welcome guests into, rather than amid adversity.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Executive Mayor Cllr Pule Shayi, Ba-Phalaborwa Mayor Cllr Meriam Malatji, traditional leaders, organisers, sponsors, artists, vendors, and community members for their understanding and cooperation during this challenging time. We will continue to keep the public informed about the disaster response and rescheduled festival dates through official channels.

I urge members of the public to remain vigilant, adhere to official directives, and cooperate with disaster management teams.

Thank you for your commitment to building a Limpopo that works for all.

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