

Govt issues road safety dos and don'ts for festive season

The Works and Transport ministry tasks road users to ensure their safety and that of others including children as they travel during this festive season.

BY FRANKLIN DRAKU

The Minister of Works and Transport, Gen Katumba Wamala, has urged Ugandans to respect road rules and ensure their safety during the festive period.

Gen Katumba, in a speech read by Ms Barbara Namugambe, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Works and Transport, during the launch of the road safety week and launch of mandatory vehicle inspection, warned that the festive season normally brings recklessness among road users and that this time around, caution must be exercised to avoid road carnage. The event was held at Namanve, outside Kampala City.

"We are going into Christmas. And if we all avoid road crashes, we should be able to smile. As we approach the festive season, I urge all road users to prioritise safety and reflect on the dangers of road crashes," he said.

Gen Katumba added that there has been an ongoing sensitisation of road users across the country, adding that this year, the focus is on safe vehicles for a safer Uganda. He said, unlike previous years, this year's sensitisation campaigns have been held in various parts of the country, including the painting of zebra crossings.

He said the government has launched the vehicle inspection exercise to ensure vehicles plying the different routes in the country are roadworthy.



Residents inspect the wreckage of a vehicle that collided with a taxi in Fort Portal City on September 22. Nine passengers sustained injuries in the road crash. PHOTO/ALEX ASHABA

"A vehicle's safety rating is crucial in preventing crashes and protecting occupants. As owners of vehicles, it is our responsibility to ensure our vehicles are roadworthy through regular checks, repairs, and maintenance. Let's affirm that our vehicle's safety elements are always functional. Government's commitment to vehicle safety is evident in our takeover of mandatory motor vehicle inspection facilities," Gen Katumba said.

The minister also said road users must observe the speed limits, road signs, and ensure they do not drive under the influence of substances, such as alcohol.

"As we celebrate this festive season, we need to drive safely and responsibly. We need to drive within the prescribed

STATISTICS ON CRASHES

Uganda's 2024 road crash data shows a significant rise in accidents and fatalities, with more than 25,000 crashes, 5,144 deaths (14 daily), and 25,808 casualties, driven mainly by reckless driving, speeding, and poor road conditions, with motorcyclists (bodaboda) and pedestrians being the most vulnerable victims.

Key causes included careless overtaking and speeding (44.5 percent), while peak times for deaths were from 6pm to 8pm.

speed limits. Avoid driving under the influence. And I grew up thinking that it was the influence of alcohol. But after growing up, I realised there is an influence of so many other things. So let us avoid driving under the influence of whatever is happening in our lives at that time," he said.

The Works minister added: "Wear seat belts and crash helmets. Avoid distractions while driving... that person you're trying to respond to on WhatsApp, which call you think is so important, it can wait until you reach a safe place and call them back. There is nothing that can't wait. But after you crash and you're no more, then people start running around, but... you could have waited, and you would have avoided a road

crash."

Safety of children

Gen Wamala also warned parents against travelling with children without a seat and child restraint belts, adding that such irresponsible parents endanger the lives of innocent children.

"For when we are travelling with our children, we should use child restraints. It's 'funny' [when] you find a parent with their son in the front seat, and the child is just waving and [you ask yourself] what kind of parent is this one? ... and the window is even open. Please, let us be responsible," he said.

Mr Winstone Katushabe, the commissioner for transport and road safety regulation at the Ministry of Works and Transport, said the ministry has embarked on raising awareness about vehicle safety to ensure that all motorists are safe while driving and riding.

"This year, our focus is on raising public awareness on vehicle safety in line with the ministry's ongoing efforts to ensure a safe vehicle fleet on our roads through the implementation of mandatory motor vehicle inspection services. In addition, we continue to address road indiscriminate and key behavioural risk factors that contribute to road crashes. These include speeding, drink-driving, inconsiderate driving manoeuvres, non-use of motorcycle elements, non-use of seat belts and child restraints, as well as distracted driving," Mr Katushabe said.

He added that the government will continue to play its role in ensuring roads are safe for both motorists and non-motorists.

"It is our duty to remind the public of these risks during the festive period of merrymaking and reconnection with our loved ones," Mr Katushabe said.

He said the roll-out of the mandatory motor vehicle inspection is part of the efforts to ensure safety for all road users.

"The minister of Works and Transport, in collaboration with Uganda Police Force is rolling out the mandatory motor vehicle inspection services as one of the interventions in the road safety project, the environment, and the safeguard, the health and well-being of the public. The exercise has commenced for all government vehicles," Mr Katushabe stated.