



A vehicle waits behind the lowered boom as a train passes at the same crossing where an accident between a taxi and train claimed the lives of ten children last week. Many drivers ignore the warning signs and try to make it across in front of oncoming trains. Photo: Stephen Williams

# Safety is stopping!

BYRON LA HOE

“PLEASE obey the law.”

These were the words of Ms Riana Scott, head of marketing and communications at Metrorail, to those who don't obey the warning signs at level crossings. Her plea for safety follows in the wake of last week's accident between a train and a taxi at a level crossing in Blackheath, Kuils River.

The driver of the taxi that was carrying 14 children, allegedly ignored the warning signals, drove past the waiting cars at the stop street and swerved around the lowered booms to cross the railway tracks in front of the oncoming train. Ten children died in this tragic accident. Three are still recovering in hospital. No injuries were reported from the commuters on the train and the train crew is still receiving trauma counselling.

The driver of the taxi was arrested on Sunday, upon his release from hospital, on charges of culpable homicide.

Scott said there are still a huge number of people who flout traffic laws at level crossings. This followed an investigation at six different level crossings by a local daily newspaper last week. At all six crossing people were found ignoring the warning signs, said Scott. She added the Buttskop level crossing, where the accident happened, exceeded statutory protection requirements. This particular crossing is protected by stop sign, warning signs, flashing lights and half

booms which were confirmed to be in working order.

## Abantu mabathobele izilumkiso xa bewela kumgaqo kaloliwe

“All 34 active level crossings in the region fully comply with statutory and legal requirements. Trains operate at all times with their lights on and sound their sirens on approach to level crossings.” It is important for the public to know that the warning lights only begin flashing when a train is approximately 100m

away from the level crossing. When the lights are not flashing it indicates that there isn't a train approaching the crossing. The same principle applies when a traffic light isn't working a vehicle must obey the law and stop before proceeding. Metrorail investigators as well as the Railway Safety Regulator's (RSR) inspectors and the SAPS investigate all incidents which might occur.

Mr. Lucky Montana, group CEO of the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA), parent company to Metrorail, said at a mass memorial held at the level crossing on Sunday that they offered their condolences to the families of the victims. He has also indicated that there will be a nationwide assessment done on all level crossings.

He said they will look at the possibility of shutting down the level crossings in areas where there are alternative roads or to place metro officials at crossings.

“It's not only in the Western Cape where drivers do wrong things, but I want to ask the community, let us condemn the situations where people don't respect the rules of the road.”

PRASA is currently offering support to the families of the children. Senior representatives from PRASA have visited the affected families and children currently in hospital to extend a hand of comfort and support.

“PRASA will provide support to the affected families during this time of great loss and sadness. The tragedy has affected all of us deeply.”

Wishing all our Muslim EID MUBARAK

# WINNERS

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