

Transport Month: Truck driver wellness critical to road safety

Truck drivers are essential to the trucking industry, but their work is physically demanding and puts them at risk of chronic health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. These conditions, combined with fatigue, can negatively affect reaction time and increase the risk of accidents.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

According to Anton Cornelissen, head of Heavy Haulage at Santam, a recent study conducted by the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) highlights the unfortunate prevalence of truck-related crashes on our roads.

"The RTMC conducted a study over a period of 5 years (between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2022) for trucks and buses involved in fatal crashes, which revealed that a total of 4,001 trucks and buses were involved in fatal crashes during this period in 2,560 fatal crashes with 3,413 fatalities recorded with a combined crash severity of 1.33 (average fatalities per crash).

Cornelissen says that sobering statistics like these highlight that road safety is everyone's responsibility, not just the government. "Now in its sixth year, Santam has partnered with the RTMC, in a collaborative effort with other stakeholders such as Law Enforcement, the National Bargaining Council for the Road Freight and Logistics Industry (NBCRFLI) to raise awareness around truck driver wellness and its impact on the safety on our roads through a series of Driver Wellness Awareness events. The last activation for 2023 will take place on 20 December 2023 at N3 Heidelberg.

Route management and traffic safety

"The partnership allows us to access their expertise in promoting safe driving practices and improving road safety and combine this with our know-how and experience from a heavy haulage claims perspective for the benefit of South African road safety.

"In addition, RTMC provides the necessary resources such as locations, personnel, and logistical support to ensure the success of the driver wellness days. This allows us to leverage these resources to create impactful Driver Wellness Awareness days."

"The activations address both the physical health of drivers as well as the health of vehicles. A mobile clinic from the NBCRFLI provides free medical examinations for truck drivers to look at key indicators such as blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Based on these results, information on wellness factors such as the correct diet and tips to prevent fatigue are shared with participants," says Cornelissen.

Accessibility and convenience

By choosing different locations around South Africa for the driver wellness days, Cornelissen says that the programme can reach a wider audience and cater to the needs of truck drivers across the country. "By hosting events in various locations, we can ensure accessibility and convenience for truck drivers who may be travelling through different routes. This approach demonstrates our commitment to supporting truck drivers nationwide and promoting road safety on a broader scale."

He says that as a leader in heavy haulage insurance, Santam encourages fleet operators to prioritise the health and wellness of truck drivers. And through the partnership with RTMC, they endeavour to highlight the importance of driver wellness and believe that a well-rested and healthy driver is a safe driver.

Cornelissen concludes saying that in an effort to keep expanding on the success of the initiative, this series of events will go beyond general wellness and focus on addressing the specific challenges and needs of truck drivers. "We aim to constantly strive to make these events more impactful and relevant for drivers by always expanding the number of stakeholders that offer value and free services like health checks for drivers at these events. This also provides us with a valuable opportunity to interact with the actual drivers and highlight to them the importance of safe driving practices, fatigue management, and overall well-being."

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