

# Department of Transport goes forward with controversial new driving law

According to a report by [Business Tech](#), the Department of Transport said that it is standing firm on its decision to introduce a zero-tolerance drunk driving regulation in South Africa's planned National Road Traffic Amendment Bill.



Image source: [Safely Home by Western Cape Government on Facebook](#)

The amendment bill will introduce a complete prohibition for the use and consumption of alcohol by all motor vehicle operators on South African public roads. This will be done by deleting reference to any alcohol content in the blood or breath specimen of motor vehicle drivers on the road.

The National Road Traffic Act (NRA) currently allows those who have consumed alcohol to get behind the wheel provided they are under the blood alcohol limit. These laws differentiate between normal drivers and drivers who hold professional driving permits.

Nearly all of the public submissions on the bill focused on this drunk-driving aspect, with civil society groups, businesses, legal experts and opposition parties all raising concerns of the potentially harmful impact of the provision.

## Some of the concerns about the new law:

- False positives from cough medicines, toothpaste and other products with trace amounts of alcohol;
- Insufficient capacity within the traffic department to enforce the rules;
- The change is unlikely to reduce fatalities, but could further criminalise the innocent.

The department acknowledged that certain substances could also give a false reading due to trace amounts of alcohol. However, it said that this was not enough reason to change their decision.

“A lot of cough medicines contain warning leaflets that advise people against the consumption of the medication if they will be operating a motor vehicle or heavy machinery. It is thus ideal that a person who has consumed such medication will be best advised to have a rest in order to let the effects of the medication subside. A lot of these medications cause drowsiness and thus constitutes a danger to the driver himself/herself, as well as other road users,” said the Department of Transport.

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