

Minister Fikile Mbalula on transport interventions during Coronavirus COVID-19 lockdown

3 Apr 2020

Speaking notes for the Minister of Transport, Fikile Mbalula, on the occasion of the media briefing of the Economic Cluster on COVID-19 lockdown interventions

Over the last few days we had the occasion to take stock of our interventions since the start of the lockdown.

This process included consultations with the transport industry and evaluating representations from various industry bodies. Similarly, we engaged incisively within government in order to ensure that the objectives of the lockdown are not compromised.

We are under no illusion that public transport remains one of the highest risk areas in the spread of the pandemic, and our interventions must always seek to arrest the spread of the COVID 19 virus.

Our country's socio-economic dynamics require that we continuously evaluate the measures we put in place and make adjustments, where we believe we are not realizing the lockdown objectives.

As a country, we are in uncharted waters and are confronted by a situation with no precedent to learn from. This, in essence requires agility and responsiveness on our part, with a singular focus on arresting the spread of the pandemic.

It is rather unfortunate that others see this responsiveness as lowering the bar in the measures we have introduced. We remain firmly committed to ensuring that public transport across all modes does not become an area responsible for the spread of the virus.

The adjustment of capacity from 50% to 70% in respect of the taxi industry and morning operating times of buses and taxis from 09h00 to 10h00 is informed by material conditions on the ground.

One of the key unintended consequences of the 9am cut-off time in the morning was that a significant number of people get left behind in shopping malls because some of the stores like pharmacies and banks only open at 9am. This then results in large numbers of people wandering around waiting for the next window for public transport in the afternoon.

This week we allowed buses and taxis to operate throughout the day in order to accommodate those who receive social grants. This concession expires at 20h00 this evening.

Our airspace remains closed to passenger flights, with exceptions made for authorized flights either repatriating foreign nationals or bringing South Africans stranded in foreign countries home.

Two days ago, we sent back a charter aircraft from Harare, Zimbabwe, which entered our airspace and landed at OR Tambo International without proper authorization. This is a matter that is being investigated. We have issued a Direction to this effect.

This Direction provides that foreign nationals may be repatriated back to their home countries provided that the foreign country charters an aircraft to South Africa without passengers, and that crew is not allowed to disembark.

Similarly, South African nationals may be repatriated back to the country provided they are in possession of paid flight tickets, and will be subjected to a mandatory quarantine for a period of up to 21 days.

We have further adjusted the Directive to allow the following categories of technical flights:

- Medical evacuation flights, which should not carry passengers except patients and the crew, who will be subjected to applicable mandatory quarantine laws;
- Aircraft in a state of emergency;
- Overflights;
- Technical landings for refuelling;
- Aircraft operations related to humanitarian aid, relief flights and other safety related operations.

Technical landing flights are allowed on condition that no passenger may disembark.

We equally revised the Directions on cargo to permit the movement of all cargo, rather than limit this to essential cargo.

It is imperative that we should be alive to the economic consequences of our Directions, which include, among others, the inability of essential cargo to move due to the fact that carriers package such cargo together with general cargo to achieve the economies of scale. We have been working closely with the Minister of Trade and Industry in this regard.

Update on enforcement of directions

The following numbers were recorded in respect of our law enforcement initiatives yesterday:

- 146 Roadblocks were conducted
- 17 395 Vehicles were stopped

- Our law enforcement authorities prevented from entering or exiting provincial borders, without the requisite permits:
- 86 cars in Mpumalanga
- 24 cars in the Eastern Cape
- 231 cars in Gauteng

The following offences relating to public transport were recorded:

- 2 drivers failed to sanitise their vehicles after off-loading
- 10 drivers failed to wear masks
- 2 operators attempted long distance or inter-provincial travel
- 1 driver was caught trying to operate outside the permitted hours
- 32 e-hailing providers were caught carrying more passengers than permitted
- 56 minibus drivers failed to observe the maximum limit on passengers
- 2 operators attempted to provide cross-border passenger transport

As of tomorrow, 4 April 2020, public transport operating hours will return to the morning and afternoon peak times, with slight amendments, as follows:

- 4am – 5am empty taxis are permitted on the roads, solely to make their way to collect commuters
- 5am- 10am taxis are permitted to ferry commuters at 70% licensed capacity
- 10am – 11am there is a buffer: all outstanding commuters must be dropped off & taxis parked
- 3pm – 4pm empty taxis are permitted on the roads, solely to make their way to collect commuters
- 4pm – 8pm taxis are permitted to ferry commuters at 70% licensed capacity
- 8pm – 9pm there is a buffer: all outstanding commuters must be dropped off & taxis parked

We extend our appreciation to law enforcement officers who are hard at work and go beyond the call of duty to ensure that we are able to arrest the spread of this pandemic and save lives. We thank our ordinary citizens who continue to obey the regulations and exercise vigilance in ensuring that they remain healthy.

We will strengthen the arm of the law to deal decisively with those who flagrantly disregard the regulations and expose others to possible infection through their reckless behavior. Our law enforcement officers must enforce the law without fear or favour and adopt a no-nonsense approach towards those who continue to place the lives of others in harm's way.

We have noted a number of fake social media posts making rounds creating an impression of general disregard of lockdown regulations. Our communities must be vigilant and continue to obey the lockdown rules as this is the only way to preserve life and stop the spread of this virus dead on its tracks.

Enquiries:
Ayanda Allie Paine
Cell: 072 566 0827

Issued by:
[Department of Transport](#)
More from:
[Department of Transport](#)
More on:
[Disaster management](#)
[Transport](#)