Tips to keep safe on SA roads this festive season

With the festive season fast approaching, many South Africans are likely to be in the final stages of planning their holiday activities, most of which will include road travel.

Whether it be to the mall, airport, the houses of friends and family, or further from home to a resort near the seaside, it is important to keep in mind that this time of year is notorious for road accidents, so taking extra precaution is essential.

According to Greig Hains, managing director at motor financial service provider, MotorVaps, motorists should plan for all possibilities from breakdowns, to theft and accidents.

Hains shares his top three tips for keeping safe on the roads this holiday season:

When it comes to breakdowns, prevention is key.

"Making sure your vehicle is well maintained and is kept in a roadworthy condition is important all year round but, ahead of a long journey, it is advisable to pay particular attention to checking that everything is working as it should," he says, adding that this should include checking lights, indicators, brakes, windscreen wipers, wheel alignment, exhaust system, and tyres.

Source: pixabay.com

"Some of these components are covered under service and maintenance plans, so those who have invested in these value-added products may want to check with their motor financial services providers to find out what they are entitled to in their policy."

Hains suggests motorists have their cars' roadworthiness tested ahead of a long drive. "Not only will this reduce their risk of breaking down or causing a road accident, but it can also save them money in the long run by identifying mechanical and electrical faults early on, before things deteriorate and expensive components such as the clutch or engine are affected."

Take in your surroundings to avoid nasty surprises.

Hains highlights that it is crucial that motorists are not distracted while driving and that they get into the habit of constantly observing their environment and paying attention to what others are doing around them.

He says, "With the increase in drunk driving around the festive season, this is a must for motorists taking to our roads this time of year. While the actions of others will never be something motorists can control, being aware - and responding accordingly - can save their lives."

"If motorists notice someone acting suspiciously, they should do their best to avoid them and report their observations to authorities when it is safe to do so."

Hains explains that it is important to remember that South Africa's high crime rate means motorists are also vulnerable to criminal threats such as hijackings and smash-and-grabs.

"Sadly, criminals don't seem to take the festive season off, so be aware of which areas present a threat of criminal activity, be alert and keep valuables out of sight," he adds.

Be a responsible driver

Hains notes that while South Africans are gearing down and looking forward to some time off to relax, they need to be strict on a few very important guidelines if they intend to take to the driver's seat and want to avoid a bumper bash or a more serious collision.

He says, "It is a massively underrated responsibility you take on when you sit behind that wheel and it's important not to forget the basics."

Hains explains that these include things like not drinking and driving, not driving when tired and sticking to the speed limit. "Motorists should also remember to only ever overtake others when it is safe to do so, to remain alert at all times and avoid distractions, use their lights when necessary to remain visible to other drivers, make sure their headlights are dimmed when oncoming vehicles are within range of the main beam and always maintain a safe following distance," he adds

"The festive season is about spending time with your loved ones and creating wonderful, lasting memories. The last thing you want is for this to be disrupted by avoidable car trouble or a moment of distraction behind the wheel. Be prepared and drive safe this festive season," Hains concludes.