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Stay safe on the roads this festive season

MAHIKENG MAIL - MAHIKENG: The December holidays are here, and, with local travel restrictions having eased, the open road beckons once more. Unfortunately, this is also one of the most dangerous times of the year for motorists, with nearly 1,400 fatalities on South Africa's roads in the last festive season.

To avoid becoming one of the statistics, there are several precautions you can take. Wynand van Vuuren, partner of client experience at insurer King Price, shares his top tips for staying safe on the roads this holiday season.

Get your car ready

Check your tyres. If you're taking a long trip, it's a good idea to have your wheels balanced, aligned and rotated. Check that your tyres have enough tread, and there are no bulges or cracks.

Top up your fluids. Your car has six essential fluids: oil, transmission fluid, antifreeze/coolant, brake fluid, power steering fluid and windscreen washer fluid. Check them all and top them up if necessary.

Do some general maintenance. Check your windscreen wipers, filters, hoses and belts. Also, test your brakes and make sure that your headlights, daytime running lights, brake lights, hazards and reverse lights are all working.

Pack the essentials

"I talk about the three Ps of any road trip: Phone chargers, playlists, and 'padkos'. It's also worth checking your medical emergency kit, and making sure that your tyre-changing tools are present and in working condition," says Van Vuuren.

Don't drive tired

Fatigue is one of the biggest killers on our roads. Get enough sleep the night before and, if you find yourself becoming drowsy while driving, pull over and take a break.

If you're travelling with somebody else, take turns behind the wheel.

Avoid distractions

Don't text and drive. No, not even a quick text to update your family on your progress. If you have to use your phone, wait for a stop. And make sure that everyone in the car understands the importance of not distracting the driver.

Drive defensively

"Watch out for other drivers. You might be a careful driver, but that doesn't mean everybody else is. Stay focused, and be alert to road conditions and other road users' unpredictable overtaking manoeuvres and behaviour," says Van Vuuren. Be patient, and avoid unnecessary risks: It's just not worth it. Don't speed, don't drink and drive, don't text and drive, and always wear your seat belt.

Make sure your insurance is up to date

Before you leave, check your car insurance cover to ensure that it's up to date. Also, check whether your policy offers roadside assistance, in case anything happens along the way, and make sure that you're saved the relevant emergency numbers on your phone. For King Price clients, this is 0860 50 50 50.

"And finally, chill. Everyone else on the roads is trying to get to their loved ones as well. By doing everything you can to stay safe on the roads, you'll make your holiday trips fun and enjoyable, not the survival of the fittest," says Van Vuuren.

Karli Stock - Senior Consultant

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