

Media release

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Workshop tackles road transport legislation and its impact on the economy

At Agbiz's Grain Logistics Workshop, which took place outside Johannesburg on 11 February 2015, participants discussed solutions for complying with the amendments to the National Road Traffic Regulations. Matters such as the condition of South Africa's roads, the many unroadworthy vehicles on the country's roads, the impact of the high number of truck accidents on the economy, as well as self-regulation as a possible solution, were also placed in the spotlight. The following are highlights of the workshop.

New regulations good news for SA roads but will make life difficult for truck owners

The new regulations pertaining to the National Road Traffic Act, 1996 (Act No. 93 of 1996), which came into effect on 31 October 2014 (definition of consignors and consignees) and on 31 January 2015 (Regulations 330A to 330D), are not good news for both consignors and consignees. The regulations are, however, certainly good news for South Africa's depleted roads – especially those in rural South Africa, said Alta Swanepoel of Alta Swanepoel & Associates at the workshop.

Section 74A of the Act requires a consignor, as well as a consignee, to take all reasonable steps to avoid overloading a vehicle. Furthermore, in the event of prosecution, the consignor or consignee must be able to indicate what steps were

taken to avoid the overloading of vehicles.

Section 74B requires accurate documentation, as it may be used as evidence in a court cases. Regulations 330A and 330B explain in detail the responsibilities of a consignor or consignee.

Overloaded trucks are the main reason for damaged roads and the new regulations will ensure that the weight that trucks carry will be calculated more fairly and scientifically. The new regulations also endeavour to place the responsibility where it belongs, she said. The new regulations apply to consignors and consignees that transport 500 000 kg and more per month.

New in the regulations is the fact that consignees could now also be held accountable for ensuring that trucks carry the correct weight as stipulated by law. "Consignees are often the only players who can be identified as the party in the chain (consignor/operator/driver/consignee) who should know what the weight on a truck is and that this is in accordance with the law," Swanepoel said.

The other bad news is that trucks must now carry documents stipulating, *inter alia*, the mass they carry, to whom the truck belongs and to where it is destined. This will place a huge administrative burden on consignors.

In practice, the new regulations mean that an overloaded truck could now not be driven for 200 km before a traffic officer at a weighing bridge could check the load and order a correction of the weight. "At that stage, the truck has already damaged the 200 km of road it travelled on," according to Swanepoel.

The distribution of weight on a truck is the important factor that determines the load's potential to damage roads, she explained. "In the past, most consignors only checked the total mass of the vehicle and not the axle masses. The new regulations stipulate that the weight that each axle carries must be calculated, as well as other factors, such as the weight of the diesel or petrol it carries. A "one-tonner", for instance, does not mean that the truck can carry one ton of weight. "Others factors also add to the one ton and these have to be calculated as well," Swanepoel said. This means that consignors will in most instances need scales

that can weigh individual axles and axle-units to calculate a truck's weight. These scales are expensive.

Another new regulation that will add to the escalating bill is the compulsory liability insurance that consignors now will have to take out to ensure that there is no loss to government's coffers when, for instance, a truck runs into a bridge on the N1.

"And you are living in dreamland if you think that policing the system is impractical and will not happen due to a lack of expertise or manpower. "The expert eyes of an experienced traffic officer will quickly detect if a vehicle carries more weight than it should. The documentation that has to accompany a vehicle will be a give-away if the truck is overloaded. And, if the officer has his or her doubts, the vehicle will be directed to the nearest weighing bridge (this is compulsory), albeit 100 km away."

If found guilty, a fine of up to R240 000 and even a term in prison of up to six years may await you.

The bottom line: Know what is expected of you and comply, Swanepoel recommended. If not, you could be in serious trouble.

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Driving in SA no trip to Disneyland

Unfit vehicles, unfit drivers, bad and dishonest administrators and bad traffic policing were but some of the realities of driving in South Africa, said Gavin Kelly from the Road Freight Association*.

"Traffic policing is inconsistent and there are high levels of corruption among officers, stretching from illegal fines to problems with dockets. Traffic officers have poor technical skills and often cannot even perform not only basic, but also fundamental tasks. They have lost the plot of safety and the free flow of traffic," Kelly said.

He discussed administrative difficulties, such as the lengthy delays in getting permits and licences, among others. "There is furthermore no coordination between

transport and traffic services. The split in departments allows for confusion,” Kelly said.

“It seems when it comes to freight policy, government believes that, removing trucks from South Africa’s roads will solve many problems, including congestion, pollution and road damage. Such a shortsighted approach will damage many business undertakings. The continual threat of the move from road to rail fuels mistrust in the authorities in the majority of policy debates.”

Kelly also highlighted many problems with regard to operator licensing. These include poor control over the granting of operating permits; no centralised system to record operator details and their history; and non-compliant operators who operate under the radar and who seem to be immune. “Furthermore, aberrant operators get back on the roads without having had to correct their operations or the condition of their trucks. Problem vehicles are not taken out of circulation, problematic test centres are not dealt with and there is widespread corruption in certification.”

Kelly said that the process of issuing driver’s licenses is another problem area. “The current process is flawed. It does not prepare drivers for the actual vehicles that they will eventually drive. The current process encourages taking the easy route by buying illegal licences. There is also no database of errant drivers.”

He suggested industry controlled vehicle and driver fitness to improve the situation.

**The Road Freight Association is a trade association, representing private operators from owner-drivers with only a handful of trucks to medium and large operators. Membership is voluntary and the association currently has 746 members. To date it has spent R4 million on litigation against corrupt authorities at various levels and R5 million on driver training and wellness programmes. It receives no government support for its industry safety projects. The association is funded by members and fund-raising activities.*

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Self-regulation scheme leads to good results

There are far too many truck accidents in South Africa and this situation hurts the economy. In South Africa, the cost of logistics as a percentage of the GDP is around 12%. This is almost double that of the United States and 50% more than Japan and Brazil. This was stated at the workshop by Paul Nordengen from the CSIR.

“We have a culture of non-compliance in various spheres and we do not realise the extent of the effect on the economy. There are many unroadworthy trucks on the road and vehicle cost can, for instance, be more than double on a bad road,” Nordengen said.

In an effort to promote self-regulation among operators, the CSIR developed the Road Transport Management System (RTMS). This is a government-supported, voluntary, self-regulation scheme, which encourages consignees, consignors and road transport operators to implement a management system. It constitutes a set of standards with outcomes that contribute to preserving road infrastructure, improving road safety and increasing productivity.

Key focal areas in the system are load optimisation, driver wellness, vehicle maintenance and productivity, Nordengen said. The RTMS standards are aligned with the new ISO 39001: Road Traffic Safety Management Systems. Bus operators, such as Buscor, InterCape and GABS, for instance, are RTMS accredited.

To comply, participants must maintain a haulage fleet inventory. Vehicles must be assessed before each trip and the mass that vehicles carry must be determined and verified before each trip. The emphasis is on load and road safety and vehicle maintenance. The scheme furthermore focuses on driver wellness, as well as the provision of training and education. Participants must keep records and other documentation. The participating companies have reported good results since their accreditation. Examples of which are the following:

- Barloworld Logistics reported a 66% reduction in the number of crashes in 2012.
- Vehicle Delivery Services reported a 42% reduction in serious crashes from

2011 to 2012.

- Timber Logistics Services reported a 50% reduction in crashes and incidents from 2009 to 2012.
- The City of Cape Town: Electricity Support Services, reported a 44% reduction in the number of crashes.
- Unitrans Amatikulu reports that the cost of crashes has been reduced from 5.0% of revenue to 1.3% of revenue.

Participants also reported qualitative benefits, such as a reduced turnover of drivers due to HIV-related issues, as well as an improved standard of living among drivers. There is also an improvement in driver wellness, resulting in a consequent decrease in absenteeism.

Drivers report fewer breakdowns, their driving behaviour improves, and there is the reassurance that drivers are medically fit to drive a heavy vehicle.

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Transport-hungry economy needs more kilometres travelled

South Africa has a transport-hungry economy, requiring more transport activity, (more kilometres travelled), to generate more Rand value, said Nadia Viljoen from Growth and Intelligence Network (GAIN) at the workshop.

This is especially true in the grain industry, as the industry is structured in such a way that it exported a great proportion of maize and imported a great proportion of wheat for local consumption, she said. "These imports and exports have to travel hundreds of kilometres, as maize farms and wheat mills are situated far from ports," Viljoen said.

She pointed out that the costs of logistics constitute a significant concern for the agricultural sector. Apart from the great demand for transport in the grain industry, the agricultural sector, in general, is primarily dependent on road transport, which is relatively expensive, given the low commodity value of grains.

"While more efficient trucking would definitely have an impact on transport costs, we

need to be more drastic in considering ways to reduce the demand for transport in the industry overall.”

“This could include establishing processing capacity for imported grains closer to the ports. A modal shift back to rail could also have a positive cost impact, provided that the availability of carriages is sufficient and the timeliness and reliability of the service are sufficiently competitive to replace the road solution.”

“With an view to South Africa’s broader economy, increased agricultural beneficiation would reduce current inefficiencies that are incurred when grains are exported as raw material and the processed product is imported.”

“It would furthermore stimulate the industry by creating jobs and increase the value of exports, thus earning the country more revenue. Given the size of South Africa’s grain industry, it is sufficiently powerful to, by way of a collaborated effort, change the trends that currently hamper its competitiveness,” Viljoen said.

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Some other opinions:

The basics of RTMS

Oliver Naidoo from JC Auditors, which is the company responsible for the accreditation of the Road Transport Management System (RTMS), explained the details of acquiring accreditation and how the system was monitored. He said that RTMS certification required an operator to demonstrate compliance with the SABS standard, SANS 1395-1:2012 – formerly ARP 067-1:2006.

“Its main purpose is to encourage operators to implement a structured management system. Such a management system enables operators to safely and effectively manage operations, by embracing the philosophy of continuous improvement,” according to Naidoo.

The main elements of the system comprise the following:

- Loading control (mass assessment and verification).
- Safety compliance (road safety, maintaining roadworthy vehicles, as well as vehicle and load safety).
- Driver wellness (driver health and wellness).
- Support (resources and training).

Details are available on www.rtms-sa.org

RTMS made a difference to Barloworld

Adrian van Tonder from Barloworld Transport, which had been implementing the Road Transport Management System (RTMS) successfully since 2011, said that there were not only internal benefits in getting accredited.

“Internally, there has been a stringent adherence to matters such as legal payloads, speeding, maintenance practices, training and education, as well as risk management. Externally, RTMS also provides a strategic advantage when you are selling sustainable transport solutions. The system provides a formal framework for all existing operational and technical protocols. Barloworld Transport has been awarded contracts owing to good internal risk and operational protocols, and the RTMS assisted in bringing this together.

“It is not that difficult to comply. You are probably doing most of what is required for accreditation already. If not, you should be because, by not meeting the requirements, you constitute a danger on the road. Time, however, has proven that obtaining RTMS certification is sometimes easier than executing RTMS,” he said.

Put the facts on the table

Through visibility (starting simple) and by regulating yourself, you will open the door to a whole new level of efficiency and reduced costs. This was the message of **Andrew Crickmay** from Crickmay and Associates at the workshop. The company specialises in creating self-regulated and efficient supply chains for its clients. It is assisting with the implementation of the Road Transport Management System (RTMS) in the timber industry.

Crickmay pointed out that it is important to “make the facts visible”. Before the RTMS system could be successfully implemented or sold to an industry, it is important to know what the facts are, who does what and, especially, who does what wrong. If people see the entire picture, and what is going on in the supply chain, they are more likely to have a change of mind and support a system such as RTMS.

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