

30% of city drivers fail drugalyser test, study finds

BABALO NDENZE

A STARTLING number of Cape Town motorists pulled over at roadblocks have tested positive for drugs, with a third of Mitchell's Plain drivers testing positive for tik, according to South Africa's first drug-driving report.

Also, half of the people treated at hospitals for road accident injuries tested positive for an illegal substance.

The tests were carried out at roadblocks between April and November, and the report put together by Trimega Diagnostics, working with the SA Police Service and traffic officers in Gauteng and the Western Cape.

About 30% of motorists tested in Mitchells Plain, Hout Bay and Sea Point tested positive for drugs in the field study using the drugalyser, launched officially yesterday.

"The research showed that nationally motorists tested positive for alcohol in 28% of the 269 cases tested, whereas positive drug results were obtained

in 14%," the report said.

"After alcohol, amphetamines, methamphetamine and cocaine were the most common drugs of impairment.

"There were 14 cases where ... drivers tested positive for alcohol and drugs, but there were many more where the drivers tested positive only for drugs. Previously their impairment would have gone undetected."

The report said although the numbers were small, the percentage of people injured in accidents who tested positive for drugs ranged from 27% to 55% in Cape Town.

"It was not clear whether the injured patients were drivers or passengers."

Ashley Uys, Trimega Diagnostics co-founder, said people tested positive for drugs at all hours of the day.

"Some tested positive at 10 in the morning. People use them any time of the day."

The Department of Community Safety says motorists stopped at roadblocks and found to have drugs in their system will not get away lightly.

"Motorists visibly affected by drugs and whose driving is impaired will be arrested and prosecuted. In these instances, blood samples will be taken."

The department said it was consulting the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions "to establish protocols and prosecutorial guidelines" for drivers' drug-related offences.

Community Safety MEC Patrick McKenzie said work had begun on changing the law to include driving under the influence of a drug.

In Sea Point, 59% of drivers stopped tested positive for alcohol, 35% for drugs, and 33% for both. In Hout Bay, 83% tested positive for alcohol, 33% for drugs, and 33% for both.

In Brackenfell, 70% tested positive for alcohol and 15% for drugs, and in Mitchell's Plain, 14% for liquor, 33% for tik, and 7% for both.

"The highest percentages of positive cases for the drug screens were (50%), recorded in central Cape Town."

The report said the findings

To Page 4



release were Venessa Strauss of
Picture: MICHAEL WALKER



SAY AAAHH: Community Safety MEC Patrick McKenzie has a saliva drug test at the official launch of the drugalyser, as Avi Lasarow, managing director of Trimega Diagnostics, looks on.

Picture: BRENTON GEACH

Motorists to face blood tests after failing drugalyser checks

From Page 1

suggested that under normal procedures, only 76% of the drivers impaired by alcohol and drugs would have been detected.

"The screening devices alone would not serve as a basis for prosecution, and provision would need to be made for the confirmation of results through laboratory testing," the report said.

"The suspect should be transported to a medical facility for a blood test."

The drugalyser was piloted

in Randburg, Gauteng, in partnership with the police, and across the Western Cape with the Department of Community Safety and the City of Cape Town traffic services.

Trimega said the research findings would be used to seek independent legal opinion on the use of the drugalyser as an initial screening device for people driving under the influence of drugs, align its use with human rights and judicial processes, and assess the drugalyser as an initial

screening tool to be used in combination with blood tests.

Meanwhile, Cape Town's Traffic Services says it has intensified its Safer Festive Season plan.

"At a Green Point roadblock at the weekend, 10 people were arrested for driving under the influence and 71 were fined for driving defective or unlicensed vehicles or for not having a driver's licence," Merle Lourens, principal inspector and spokesperson for Cape Town Traffic Services, said.

She said that from November 17 to 23, the focus had been shifted to outstanding warrants of arrest.

The traffic department's warrants team had arrested 72 motorists, against whom there were 845 warrants for R789 410 in fines.

"High-visibility patrols will be extended along the major routes, like the N1, N2 (Settler's Way), M5 (Kromboom Parkway) and N7 (Vanguard Drive)."

babato.ndenze@inl.co.za

F
M
si
",
H

L
u
ht
st
sc
cl
in

ra
to

Va
lea
prc
any
rio:
chi

gul
mer
Bia
and
July
that
trau
rem
H
com
mon
Kiev
huiz
hard
tion
woul
d
hims
often
with
Vs
acted
when
given
about
Kiewi
It v
he wa
inquir
ing to
driver
that w
f
by two
under