

Death toll in Mpumalanga crash rises to 10

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The mangled remains of the Springbok-Atlas bus

The death toll in yesterday's horror bus accident in which nine British, German and Canadian tourists died instantly, has risen to 10. A Scottish woman whose condition was critical last night, died in hospital. Two more of the injured are still in a critical condition, with head, spinal and leg injuries. All 12 tourists have been taken to the Meulmed hospital in Pretoria for further treatment.

They include the bus driver, tour guide and two tourists from Scotland and Germany. The four are in critical condition with head and spinal injuries. The bus operator, Springbok Atlas, has made R1 million available for medical treatment.

Four Britons, three Canadians and two German tourists died when the bus left the road near Piet Retief and overturned. The wreckage of the bus has been taken to the Piet Retief police station for investigation. The tourists were on their way to Swaziland from a private game reserve in KwaZulu-Natal.

Five of the dead tourists were British, and another five Brits were injured. Three Canadians died and another three sustained injuries. Three German visitors also lost their lives and one was injured. The coach was on the third day of a routine trip between Durban, the Kruger Park and Johannesburg, a Springbok Atlas spokesperson said. Another Springbok Atlas bus was involved in a similar accident in October 1999 when 27 British tourists died after the bus plunged down Mpumalanga's Long Tom Pass after its brakes failed and the driver lost control.

Killer buses must be removed from SA roads

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(<http://www.theherald.co.za> accessed on 10 October 2010)

WEDNESDAY'S tragic bus accident in the Western Cape in which 19 adults and three children were killed would be horrific enough if it was an isolated incident.

It is not, and the unpleasant reality is that barely a week passes without a bus accident being reported in which people are killed or injured, reflecting the fact that far more decisive action is required than is the case at present.

However, if punitive action is to succeed it must target not only the driver of the vehicle but also the owners who must ultimately take responsibility for ensuring the buses they send out are roadworthy; are not overloaded and that each is equipped with two drivers to avoid driver fatigue that is often the cause of accidents.

While an investigation has yet to be carried out, it would appear that in this latest incident, according to Western Cape Transport MEC Robin Carlisle, the bus was not licensed, nor registered and was not fit for operation, a statement that is supported by the fact that the vehicle was removed from the road in the Eastern Cape last year.

In addition, surviving passengers reported that the driver had fallen asleep, pointing to driver fatigue.

We believe that two interventions are required urgently to address a situation that is cause for national shame. The first is far more intensive law enforcement, not just during holiday periods but throughout the year.

In addition, as it appears that unroadworthy vehicles are now travelling on back roads there is a need for an intelligence component in provincial traffic departments that will identify the alternative routes so as to catch those who wilfully place the lives of others at risk.

Furthermore, there needs to be strong co-operation between the provinces, specifically along the regular routes such as that linking the Western Cape with the former Transkei.

Secondly, the owners of vehicles that are found to be unroadworthy, overloaded, not registered or licensed or travelling long distances without two drivers or providing time for

rest periods must, as Carlisle quite correctly said, be charged "with everything that they can be".

In addition, we believe the vehicle should be confiscated and that the existing penalties should be reviewed to provide for prison terms without the option of a fine.

It cannot be right that individuals in pursuit of profits should place the lives of those who rely on public transport at risk by failing to take every possible measure to ensure they arrive safely at their destination and government must ensure that they do.

If the government again pussyfoots around this problem many more innocent people will die at the hands of unscrupulous bus operators.