

# Periodic vehicle testing and inspections required



**T**he Vehicle Testing Association (VTA) strongly believes that periodic vehicle testing (PTI) could go a long way in improving road safety in South Africa.

However, several years after the legislation for more regular vehicle inspections was promulgated by South Africa's Minister of Transport, the implementation is yet to happen. The legislation was published with implementation at a date to be determined by the minister. To date, there has been no mention of even a suggested implementation date. Should the legislation be implemented it would mandate that vehicles 10 years and older be tested for roadworthiness every two years.

Currently, vehicles are only tested for roadworthiness on change of ownership. In addition, taxis and heavy goods vehicles are tested annually, and buses are tested six-monthly. The market demand for testing stations is therefore mostly dependent on the used vehicle sales, and the current economic environment is not helping to grow this market.

According to the National Traffic Information System (NaTIS), the live and registered vehicle population of South Africa was 12.96 million vehicles at the end of October 2021. Of these vehicles, only 21% are required to be tested on a regular basis. These include trucks, buses and taxis as well as vehicles undergoing a change of ownership. This means that 79% of the vehicle population in South Africa has no requirement to

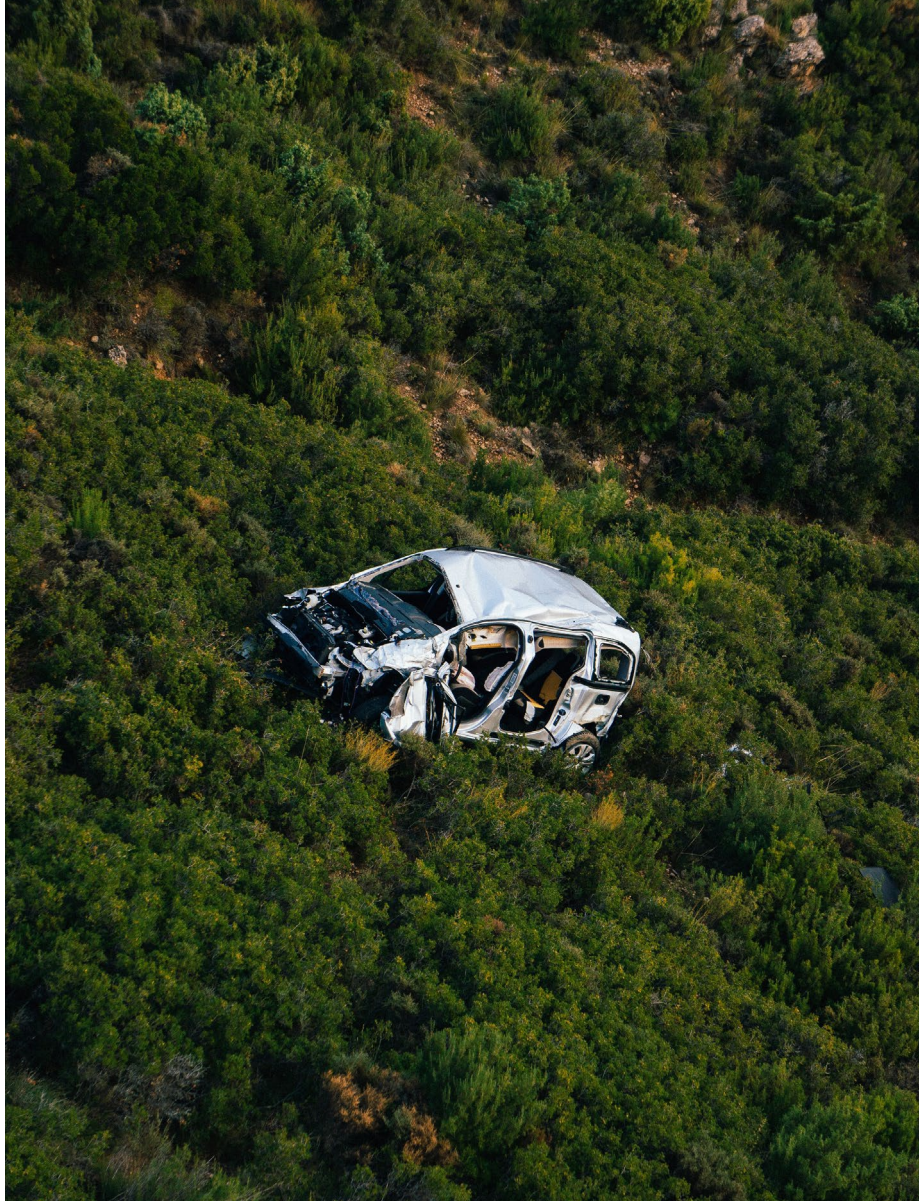
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of the Minister of Transport. The requirements, which need to be complied with, are articulated in national standards as well as in the road traffic legislation.

Another concern from the government is that of the additional cost it will now place on vehicle owners of older cars, many of who cannot afford any extra expenses given the current economic situation. Whilst the VTA sympathise with the plight of adding extra expenses to any citizen, it is also believed that one cannot put a price on safety and ultimately human life. The VTA believes that with proper strategising and consultation between all relevant stakeholders in the process a solution can be arrived at in response to the issue of cost.

In the meantime, the high number of fatalities on South African roads remains a blot on the country's road safety record.

The VTA strongly believe that the implementation of Periodic Vehicle Testing and Inspection (PTI) will yield great benefits for the country by way of reducing road deaths, creating jobs and stimulating the retail sector with the maintenance of vehicles in a safe and roadworthy condition.

New vehicles are manufactured to the highest safety standards, and while new vehicles coming off the assembly line are safer now than ever before, in South Africa, our response to in-use vehicle inspection controls is certainly not adequate. Vehicles do age without changing ownership. Socio-economic factors are adding to this problem and vehicles are not being maintained which is why the implementation of the gazetted legislation for more frequent testing of vehicles is so important. Whole life vehicle compliance should be our aim.

With a holistic approach to road safety, where interventions include vehicle inspection controls in a regular vehicle testing regime, other countries have shown a decrease in road deaths.

The VTA are confident that South Africa will be no different when PTI is eventually implemented here.

Vehicles that are constantly maintained and kept in a roadworthy and safe condition will have a positive impact on road safety and result in a decrease in the number of fatalities from road crashes. **a**

be tested, no matter the age of the vehicle. This is unacceptable as it means that the majority of vehicles on our roads are constantly ageing and potentially becoming unroadworthy with no system in place to measure and rectify this.

In South Africa, vehicle defects or un-roadworthiness is a large contributor to the high number of fatal road crashes that occur each year. The in-depth investigation of major road crashes reveals that when the factors contributing to accidents, the vehicle types and the road environment have been taken into consideration, the major factors of vehicle defects causing fatal crashes in South Africa include tyres bursting, faulty brakes, other unroadworthy factors, headlights (faulty, blinding or not switched on) and tyre failure (tread separation from wheel or smooth tyres).

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It is clear that a more regular regime of vehicle inspection will have a positive influence on reducing road fatalities. Why then is the implementation of periodic testing taking such a long time?

In October 2014 there was an amendment to regulation 138 which stated that all vehicles 10 years and older, from the date this is gazetted, will be required to be tested and certified roadworthy after every 24 months. Unfortunately whilst this was included and still remains in the National Road Traffic Amendment Bill, to date it has not been gazetted or implemented.

While this question needs to be answered by the Minister of Transport, the industry has been gearing up to be prepared for this increased demand, should PTI be implemented. Concerns from the government include station compliance and the scourge of corruption at test stations, where a few shady operators tarnish the entire industry.

The more than 560 test stations in South Africa are monitored for compliance by the South African Bureau of Standards, which is the appointed Inspectorate of Test Stations on behalf