

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release – Friday, 21 March 2014

Railway Safety Regulator Investigates Rustenburg Level Crossing Accident

The Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) dispatched inspectors to the scene of a railway level crossing accident in North West, where a train collided with a car carrying children on Thursday, 20 March 2014. The RSR inspectors visited the scene to establish the root cause of the accident that occurred at the Dr Moroka level crossing in Rustenburg, late afternoon on Thursday.

The car, an Avanza, carrying 12 children in pre and primary school, aged between five to eight years, crossed the level crossing without observing the approaching train. A collision resulted between the car and the on-coming Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) train. Four children died in the accident, the driver suffered minor injuries while the remaining children were taken to nearby hospitals where some are still in a critical condition. The families of the deceased children have been informed.

RSR is conducting an investigation into the accident. Preliminary findings show that the back of the vehicle was still on the railway line when the collision occurred. An in-depth risk assessment of the level crossing will be conducted next week.

The Railway Safety Regulator extends its heartfelt condolences to the affected families and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

RSR further appeals to the public and all road and rail users to always take safety precautions, follow the road rules and signage, be vigilant at all times when approaching a railway level crossing, and always make use of designated level crossings and road-over-rail bridges.

The RSR, pursuant to its mandate, has in collaboration with the railway industry and the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) developed the Level Crossing Standard SANS 3000 -2 -1, published in September 2012. The Level Crossing Standard was incorporated and adopted into the National Road Traffic Act of 1996 (Act) which was approved in November 2013. This Act has made a provision for road authorities and municipalities to enforce and ensure safety compliance at the road-rail interface.

RSR has conducted information sessions nationally with all operators on the Standard to ensure a common and consistent approach to railway safety in areas including safety management, technical and operational requirements as well as human factor management.

RSR's intervention of the development of a Level Crossing Standard and the level crossing public awareness campaign "Always Expect a Train" which was launched last year (2013) by the Minister of Transport and rolled out nationally; educates the public (pedestrians and motorists) about the dangers of not adhering to the rules of the road when at a level crossings. The success of safety campaigns requires the participation and co-operation of all stakeholders, including the public.

The RSR is currently in discussions with TFR about the installation of traffic lights at level crossing in Muldervlei in Western Cape, Schovennes in Worcester, Boshhoek in North West and Delmas in Mpumalanga.

ENDS

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Rail Safety Regulator (RSR) was established in terms of the National Railway Safety Regulator Act, 2002 (Act 16, 2002) (as amended) to oversee and promote safe railway operations through appropriate support, monitoring and enforcement, guided by an enabling regulatory framework. In the interest of rail safety, RSR also collects and disseminates information relating to safe railway operations to the public by means of rail safety awareness campaigns.

THE RSR'S MANDATE IS TO:

- Oversee safety in railway transport, while operators remain responsible for managing safety of their operations.
- Develop an appropriate regulatory framework through the development of regulations and standards for safe railway operations.
- Monitor and ensure safety compliance through the conducting of audits, inspections, safety assessments and occurrence investigations.
- Collect and disseminate information relating to safe railway operations.
- Promote the harmonisation of the railway safety regime of South Africa with Southern African Development Community (SADC) railway operations.
- Promote improved safety performance in order to promote the use of rail.

