



*By Jenny Reid, Managing Director of iFacts  
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## **Unqualified drivers can be killer**

**Nearly 500 000 professional drivers are currently working without proper documentation in South Africa today. With South Africa still having the second highest road accident fatality rate in the world, isn't it high time we checked the qualifications of the people we employ?**

Anyone who spends a significant amount of time on our freeways will know that you require nerves of steel and an advanced driver's course to arrive at your destination with your life and your sanity intact. However, this really is no laughing matter. The intolerable fatality rate on our roads must be addressed urgently.

This past February alone, over 650 people died on South Africa's roads. According to the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), the deaths were from 578 crashes recorded between 1 and 27 February. Most of these cases were recorded in Gauteng, with 128 fatal crashes resulting in 136 deaths. KwaZulu-Natal had the second highest number with 94 fatal crashes and 102 deaths.

What is happening on our roads? Why are there so many accidents and what is being done to prevent them? I believe that charging unqualified drivers with culpable homicide, as was the case with the N12 horror crash driver, Isaac Maruding, is a good start. In fact, I would go as far as to say that a charge of murder would not be out of place for individuals that have no business getting behind the wheel of a large vehicle that could cause untold tragedy in the wrong hands.

However, there is a huge onus on the employers of these drivers as well.

Information from the RTMC indicates that there was a total of 433 973 expired Professional Driving Permits (PrDPs) recorded on the National Traffic Information System on December 31 2014. This means that of the total number of permits issued; only 56.65% were actually valid.

In order to obtain a professional drivers permit, drivers must produce a medical fitness certificate and maintain a clean criminal record. This doesn't seem like that much to ask to keep our roads safe.

### **Check Qualifications**

Before you employ your next driver, check that he or she is actually legally licensed to drive. According to the RTMC, there are almost half a million drivers operating on South African roads without proper documentation. As a result, owners of freight and public transport are being warned that they will be held liable for the failure of their drivers to renew their professional driver's permits.

Advocate Makhosini Msibi, CEO of the RTMC, warned transport operators that it is their duty to ensure that both the driver and the vehicle are fit to operate on a public road. The Road Traffic Act requires them to exercise proper control of their drivers and ensure compliance with all provisions of the law including requirements in respect of professional driving permits.

### **Ensuring Compliance**

To improve compliance and safety on the roads, the RTMC together with other traffic enforcement agencies have decided to take vigilance up a notch by investigating all major accidents to establish the compliance level of operators. According to Section 50 of the National Traffic Act, traffic authorities have the right to suspend or cancel the license of any operator who has failed to exercise his or her duties in terms of the Act.

Operators are warned: don't be surprised if authorities show up at your door unannounced. Inspections will be carried out, offenders will be identified and actions will be taken against those who fail to comply with the law. I must applaud the RTMC for this, and we can only hope that they do commit to sticking with their plan.

So the next time you're thinking of hiring, ensure that the candidate is legally qualified to use the road. Road traffic regulations are put in place to protect us and if more is done to support this, there may be far fewer fatalities. Enough is enough – let's keep these killer drivers off our roads.

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***About iFacts:***

iFacts removes the people risk so that organisations can go about their business with employees they can trust. iFacts has a range of services that extend into every aspect of proactive and reactive security activity, which a company requires for optimum employee performance, loyalty and integrity. From people risk, ethics and integrity to safety and security and employee wellness, iFacts offers a full range of services to both individuals and employees that will ensure your organisation is achieving optimum performance.

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