

# South Africans using technology to improve road safety

South Africa is one of the leading countries that is increasingly using technology to improve road safety, claims vehicle tracking company Tracker.



Tracker's Michael Nieuwoudt claims that electronic devices and driver monitoring is improving driving habits in South Africa. Image: Flickr

These vehicle safety technologies raise hopes of cutting SA's notoriously high number of road fatalities and may help to reduce the high costs of road accidents.

"Advancement in vehicle safety technology is happening fast," says Tracker's Commercial Director, Michael Nieuwoudt.

"Even though adoption in South Africa has taken some time it is now reaching critical mass," Nieuwoudt says, a day after the start of Transport Month that seeks to raise awareness of road safety.

Nieuwoudt says South Africa is among the leaders globally in the drive to achieve near-total technology-led road safety. "The immediate focus, though, is on minimising the risk of serious accidents," he adds.

## Road accident levels remain high

"We are already seeing technology affecting driving behaviour. Intelligent data management is now enabling companies in South Africa and beyond, to pre-empt or predict unsafe driving," Nieuwoudt says.

Road Traffic Management Corporation estimates that road accidents cost South Africa about R307bn every year and says that 2011 there were 27.58 fatalities for every 100,000 South Africans.

Transport Minister Dipuo Peters said last month that the introduction of mobile applications and related technologies to enable safer driving has become a necessity in South Africa.

Peters highlighted the importance of smartphone GPS technology in allowing for the early detection of road incidents, the subsequent deployment of emergency services and empowering drivers to anticipate road incidents and avoid congestion.

"For example, in-car GPS tracking equipment monitors braking, acceleration, cornering and speed with a direct feedback loop informing the driver where improvements can be made from a safety perspective. Incident reporting and assistance is also automated, taking some of the strain off administration. The ability to have insurance premiums reduced is a great incentive for safer driving, too," Nieuwoudt says.