

Licence renewal grace period extended

Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula has announced a further extension to the grace period for the renewal of driver's licences while government rolls out a number of measures to improve efficiencies and resolve challenges.



“All learner’s licences, driving licence cards, temporary driving licences and professional driving permits that expire during the period that commenced from 26 March 2020 up to and including 31 August 2021, are deemed to be valid and their validity periods are extended for a further grace period ending on 31 March 2022,” Mbalula said on Thursday.

This comes as the deadline for the end of the grace period for the renewal of driving licences was set for 31 August 2021.

Addressing a media briefing, the Minister said the extension comes into effect from the date of publication of the Directions in the Government Gazette.

“Nationally, 1.2 million (1,210,965) licences are not yet renewed out of a total of 2.8 million (2,852,388) expired licences. This represents 42.4% non-renewal, with 57.6% of all expired licences having been renewed,” Mbalula said.

The backlogs at the Driving Licence Testing Centres (DLTCs) has been attributed to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in restrictions that led to the closure of DLTCs.

The previous extensions of the validity period were meant to enable an orderly clearing of the backlog, however, capacity

challenges put tremendous pressure on DLTCs in processing renewals of driving licences.

Some of the officials who have been entrusted with the system, where online booking are done, block slots and sell these to those prepared to pay bribes.

In addition, the slow speed and unavailability of the eNatis system has caused frustrations for officials and motorists renewing their licences.

The minister said the faulty live capture units as well as the faulty eye testing equipment have resulted in long queues at DLTCs and there were delays in validating fingerprints as live capture units are not linked to Home Affairs real time.

“There are many more challenges that have been brought to our attention, to which we are attending with the necessary urgency. Together with the MECs, we have been hard at work in addressing these challenges.

“In May 2021, the Ministers and Members of Executive Councils Meeting (MINMEC) adopted an Action Plan to modernise and turnaround our driving licensing system and licensing centres,” Mbalula said.

DLTCs interventions

Considering that Gauteng poses the biggest challenge due to the large population of motorists, and remains the only province that has extensively deployed the online booking system, specific actions have been identified to tackle challenges specific to the province.

“Gauteng has experienced serious capacity challenges, which result, amongst others, in non-availability of slots to those who intend to renew their licences,” the Minister said.

As a result, additional capacity was added through the opening of two DLTCs operated by the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) at Waterfall Park in Midrand and Eco Park in Centurion.

These two centres opened their doors on 1 October 2021 and operate 7 days a week, from 7am to 9pm.

“The operationalisation of these centres will add 35,380 renewal slots per month and increase Gauteng capacity for renewal slots by 48%. An email service for Gauteng users who experience difficulties with online bookings and renewing their licences has been activated.

A new DLTC was opened in Tembisa in July 2021. This has further augmented capacity in the province.

“As part of the rollout of a bouquet of services to improve customer experience, processes to introduce online payments are advanced and a banking partner has already been appointed.

While we had agreed with the MECs that operating hours of DLTCs must be extended, a number of provinces have experienced challenges relating to overtime. However, significant progress has been made in this regard.

“In seven of the nine provinces, large Registering Authorities and DLTCs have extended their operating hours to include Saturdays, and further augmented their human resource capacity. Challenges are still being experienced in the Northern Cape and the City of Tshwane,” the Minister said.

The RTMC has been in discussions with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding, which will pave the way for motorists to make use of private optometrists who will have authority to upload eye test results directly to the eNatis system.

“This process has been delayed by leadership challenges at the HPCSA. The interface of live enrolment units with home

affairs has been completed. This will enable immediate validation of the fingerprints, and address a challenge that has been a cause for delays,” the Minister said.

Significant progress has been made with the deployment of eNatis equipment across all provinces to address the shortage of end-user equipment at DLTC level.

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