

Be travel wise this holiday 7 December 2010

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It's nearly time to pack the trailers and hit the roads for the long-awaited December holiday. Properly preparing for the road trip is just as important as securing your property and packing the sunscreen. ?Make sure you prepare ahead of time and, while on the road, be travel wise,? says Brendan Horan, General Manager of Sales and Marketing for MiX Telematics.

Here are a few important holiday tips from Matrix Recovery Service ? a leading brand of MiX Telematics:

#### BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Get enough sleep and plan your route - ?It is important to plan your route, including refueling points, rest points and any overnight stops if necessary. Also ensure you get enough sleep the night before your trip to ensure you are not tired when driving,? says Horan. Check your car - Before departing it is essential to check that your car is also properly prepared for a long road trip ? double check the headlights, indicators, shocks, stop lights, tail-lights, windscreen wipers, mirrors, brakes, steering, tyres, oil and water. ?Remember to also ensure that your spare wheel is in good condition,? reminds Horan. Charge the cell - Importantly, also remember to properly charge your cell phone, so you can contact emergency services should you need to.

#### ON THE ROAD

Seatbelts a must - Using seat belts is important for any road journey ? in both the front seat and the back seat. Horan says children under 12 should ideally be secured in a back seat. ?Even with air bags, the back seat is generally safer for children. Child safety seats for younger children are also essential and should be used correctly ? for example never put a rear-facing car seat in the front where there is an air bag, make sure it is securely fitted and is the right size for your child. ? Rain and slippery roads - Summer rain storms are a fact of life in South Africa ? but rainy weather causes havoc on our roads. During rainy weather, motorists can expect that slippery roads, traffic slowdowns and decreased visibility will make driving hazardous, even at moderate speeds. However, there are some precautions that you can take. Horan advises drivers to 1) allow extra following distances, 2) to not slam on brakes but instead apply a steady, light and firm pressure, 3) to drive in the centre lane and avoid the outside lane as water often collects in these areas and 4) use your headlights. Take breaks - Fatigue plays a large part in the number of road accidents we see during the December months. ?Drivers and passengers should be aware of any signs of fatigue. If the driver is drifting from lane to lane and jerking the vehicle back again, is daydreaming, constantly yawning, having difficulty focusing or keeping his/her eyes open ? it is time to stop and take a rest. Don?t rely on the radio or fresh air from an open window to keep you awake, rather pull off into a safe area, drink some coffee and try to have a 20 ? 45 minute nap,? cautions Horan. Stop in a safe spot - If you do need to rest, avoid suspicious areas and keep all your doors locked. Where possible, rather pull over to a designated rest stop, such as one of the many petrol stations which line the major routes in South Africa.

#### ANTI-HIJACKING TIPS

While there is no guarantee what action will prevent hijacking, practicing the following common sense techniques can reduce the risk:

- ? Know your destination and directions to it, and be alert should you get lost.
- ? Don't talk on your cell phone while driving, which can make you lose focus.
- ? Always drive with your windows and doors locked and/or closed. Windows should be left no more than 5cm open.
- ? Drive in the centre lane, away from pedestrians where possible.
- ? Be vigilant and regularly check your rear-view mirror to ensure that you are not being followed. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, drive to a safe area, e. g. police station, shopping centre, etc.
- ? Avoid driving through high crime or unfamiliar areas.

#### AT YOUR HOLIDAY DESTINATION

When you and your family have finally arrived at your holiday destination, it is natural to become more relaxed and less vigilant. ?We find that holiday makers often leave their vehicles unlocked at their holiday homes or park them in highly visible areas. Just because you are on holiday doesn't mean you are immune to crime. Remain vigilant and make sure your car tracking unit is in good working condition, just in case the worst happens,? warns Horan.