

## **112 is the new number to call for medical emergencies – IOL**

19 October 2019

Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize said this at the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) day celebration this week at the EMS base in Wentworth.

Mkhize was accompanied by Health MEC Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu and head of department Dr Sandile Tshabalala.

Mkhize said it was unfair for a person to be left at an accident scene because they had no medical aid, and the country needed a system that would provide help, whether the person could pay or not.

“If one needs help, it’s not about money, it’s about their life. If one needs health care they must have equal access because health is a right and that’s what the NHI (National Health Insurance) bill is all about. Anyone who walks past because a patient does not have medical aid would be committing a crime.” Mkhize said.

He said EMS was an enabling arm of the NHI bill because it aimed to achieve Universal Health Coverage and provide much-needed transportation to hospitals.

Mkhize also introduced a three-digit emergency number - 112 - along with nine new ambulances and one emergency vehicle. The number, which will phase out 10177, filters calls to the police, EMS and the fire department and has an automated answer which will prompt the caller to select their required emergency service.

Among the challenges the health department faced, Simelane-Zulu noted the safety of paramedics to be among the most important to be addressed.

Simelane-Zulu also mentioned that the department did not have enough emergency vehicles, that the ones they currently had did not have enough equipment and other equipment was old.

The department had started a programme to renew its fleet, but Simelane-Zulu said she was concerned that, in light of the attacks on the vehicles, their efforts would be in vain.

She said the department would ensure partnership with the SAPS, metro police and the public in a bid to curb the scourge.