

How cellphones can help keep travellers safe

According to South Africa's Wireless Application Service Providers' Association (Waspa), an industry representative body of over 400 members who specialise in mobile content delivery and application development, cellphones can play an important role in keeping travellers safe.



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“All South African cellular users have automatic and free access to the 112 national emergency number operated by the country’s cellular networks,” says Waspa General Manager, Ilonka Badenhorst.

This easy-to-remember number, which is the same three-digits worldwide, will put mobile callers in touch with the relevant municipal police, ambulance, fire and rescue services in a certain area.

Vodacom and MTN furthermore operate a 147 roadside assistance line which could prove especially valuable in the event of a vehicle breakdown this holiday season. This service is not free and the operator is simply the caller’s connection to a host of useful road and home assistance services that are to be settled separately with the respective service providers.



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In addition to memorising the 112 emergency and 147 assistance numbers this summer, Waspa encourages South Africans to consult the different app stores prior to setting off on their annual journeys. “Waspa members, independent developers and a host of other smart people wanting to make a difference have developed many mobile services to enhance our safety,” says Badenhorst. These are all available for download on the Apple and Android app stores.

One locally-developed personal safety app that has added significance in the run-up to the holiday season is MiBlackBox. The service is a virtual witness to emergency situations by enabling mobile users to record calls, images and videos that are automatically stored on secure servers. The recorded files and location information can be sent to preset emergency contacts in case of an emergency. MiBlackBox costs R12 a month.

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