

O. R. TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT GEARED UP FOR 4-MILLION PEAK PASSENGERS

KEMPTON PARK, 12 December 2018 – O. R. Tambo International Airport is geared up to help an anticipated 4-million passengers to get their holiday travels underway stress-free and in the smoothest way possible.

General Manager of the airport, Bongiwe Pityi-Vokwana, says the airport community is fully prepared for the busiest time of the year.

“About 38 000 people are employed in and around the airport. Of these only about 1 400 are directly employed by us. We are fortunate that all our stakeholders appreciate that we work in an ecosystem where running an efficient airport relies on continuous collaboration among thousands of people.

“Airport operations are complex. We manage volumes, variability, variety and visibility in a live environment where precision and predictability of service is the basis of our existence.

“The regulatory demands to guarantee civil aviation safety require effective planning and synchronisation of thousands of activities every hour in the passenger’s journey from arrival on our landside, to when the aircraft takes off, lands and passengers safely leave the airport,” says Pityi-Vokwana.

She says the airport has prepared thoroughly including contingency planning with the mutual support of the airport community which includes airport staff, airlines, air traffic controllers, South African Weather Services, ground handlers, contracted security staff, retailers, car rental firms, mechanical, electrical, civil infrastructure and IT equipment maintenance contractors, law enforcement agencies such as SAPS, SARS Customs & Excise, Immigration Services, State Security Agency and many others.

Pityi-Vokwana adds that a recent aircraft crash crisis simulation exercise, overseen by the South African Civil Aviation Authority as part of the airport licensing process, thoroughly tested the abilities of airlines, air traffic control, ground handlers, airport management, emergency services, law enforcement agencies, and other role players around Gauteng to respond quickly and effectively to any situation.

“In addition, airport staff and our safety and security partners have made tremendous strides over the past 18 months in intensifying our security operations and combating crime. We are especially appreciative of the efforts of the SAPS and the National Prosecuting Authority in securing convictions and lengthy sentences for some of those responsible for the armed robbery at the airport in March 2017,” she says.

The airport's law enforcement agencies executing against the government-approved Integrated Multi-Disciplinary Plan has achieved notable successes in intercepting drug concealments over the past 12 months with 1 186 seizures of drugs with a total street value of R2.9-billion.

There were 676 arrests for all classes of crime, representing a 20% month-on-month reduction in cases reported at the airport.

Says Pityi-Vokwana: "Aviation security is a highly regulated license-carrying responsibility. I am extremely proud of our security teams who are always willing to go the extra mile and demonstrate a tireless work ethic, often forfeiting meal breaks and willingly volunteering for overtime. Over 90% of the successes achieved by our passenger and hand luggage x-ray screening staff is attributable to diligence, teamwork and well-trained eyes studying passenger behavioural trends."

"This is always a very busy time for the airport. Among the four million passengers, most of them will be first-time flyers and substantial number of elderly people. The operational demands are therefore different at this time of year because of the different passenger mix. But I can assure travellers that it is all hands on deck for and we are ready. We look forward to a successful festive period and wish the best at this time for our passengers, staff and stakeholders," she said.

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Advice for passengers travelling over the festive season:

1. Give yourself and your travelling companions enough time to check in and relax. There's no reason to start off a holiday stressed out over catching flights.
2. Save or bookmark the online presence of your airline. This could be its web site or social media presence. Airlines will advise of any late changes to boarding gates, departure times and so on.
3. If you're uncertain of anything or need help, the airport has several information kiosks as well as staff members in uniform able to respond quickly.
4. For last-minute purchases, most retail stores and food outlets are open from 6am to 10pm.
5. Make sure you've checked your airline's terms and conditions. This applies especially to baggage restrictions.
6. Staff at check-in points have been instructed to enforce airline rules on hand luggage, so do ensure that you adhere to the weight and size restrictions.

7. Please remember that airlines warn passengers at the time of booking not to put any items of value in checked-in luggage.

8. In our experience, passengers are not aware of, or forget about, a range of items that are not permitted in hand luggage or on their person. The items most frequently confiscated at O. R. Tambo International Airport are:
 - Blades and razors
 - Corkscrews
 - Firearms and ammunition
 - Golf equipment
 - Knives, forks and scissors
 - Nail files and nail clippers
 - Ninja stars
 - Pocket knives
 - Safety pins and needles
 - Tools
 - Toy guns, replica guns
 - Ammunition
 - Bow and arrows
 - Sharp objects
 - Toy snakes
 - Toy spiders, replica spiders
 - Toy insects (bugs), replica insects
 - LAGS (Liquids, Aerosols and Gels) for international departures
 - Sporting equipment including soccer balls, rugby balls, volleyball balls, water polo balls and anything similar, inflated or deflated.
 - Blunt objects
 - Inflated balloons
 - Objects deemed by security assessment to have the potential to cause harm or disturbance in the aircraft. For example, some credit card-sized key rings incorporate a blade, and some bracelets now incorporate multi-tool sets.

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