

UNRA to charge up to sh533m overload fine

By Andante Okanya

The Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) will charge up to \$146,000 (about sh533m) in penalties for vehicles moving on national roads and carrying loads that exceed tonnage capacity, according to the new UNRA regulations 2017.

The regulations were disclosed yesterday during a stakeholders engagement meeting held at UNRA offices in the city suburb of Kyambogo.

UNRA expects to save \$64m (sh233.7b) annually if the axle load management and control regulations are enforced. The penalties are premised on gravity of the impact caused by the overload on the road.

The regulations on ferries, road reserves and weighbridges have since been gazetted by the works and transport minister, Monica Azuba.

It is listed as statutory instruments number 44, 45, and 46, in the Uganda Gazette dated August 31, 2017.

New Vision has seen the schedule, indicating that the smallest penalty will be \$90 (sh328,671) for overload of above half a tonne. The highest penalty of sh533m is for overload of 31.5 tonnes and above.

During the meeting, UNRA head of enforcement, John Ssejemba, blamed overload of trucks for some of the disfigured tarmac roads.

He said more weighbridges would be established at various

points, with stringent operations to weed out middlemen and unscrupulous operators who fleece and deny government revenue.

He noted that on top of fines, offenders risk losing their vehicles in the event of default.

"Offenders will have to pay express penalties, depending on the tonnage. For repeat offenders, the vehicles could be confiscated. There will also be a surcharge for late payment. In the event that the car stays with us after two months from the date of the crime, government will auction the car," Ssejemba explained.

Ssejemba stressed the essence of timely commencement and completion of road construction projects. He also decried the vandalism of UNRA road signage infrastructure, saying the unscrupulous dealers feed the lucrative metal scrap business.

Ssejemba decried the encroachment of markets on road reserves, saying it delays expansion works.

Kawempe town clerk Geoffrey Rwakabaale commended the right of way measure, saying it saves the Government the bother of conflicting with people living near the project site.

"Many times I have seen project works running into people's settlements. Let me refer to the Kalerwe area. From Kisaasi towards Kalerwe, there was excavation done by the contractor and it blocked the settlement. Roads were flooded," Rwakabaale said.

On the road furniture, the town clerk proposed for adequate sensitisation and installation of streetlights, since most of the vandalism is conducted at night.

Leaders speak out

Kampala resident city commissioner Deborah Mbabazi stressed the need for concerted public awareness.

"Joint community sensitisation is important to prepare people to accept these public projects as their own," she explained.

Lubaga division mayor Joyce Ssebugwawo advised UNRA to ensure timely and adequate compensation, lest the project affected persons sabotage the work.

Kawempe division Mayor Emmanuel Sserunjogi requested UNRA to liaise with local governments to rehabilitate feeder roads.

Mukono municipality mayor Fred Kagimu submitted that there is a conflict between ownership and

responsibility on road reserves.

"The drainage and water channels are not cleared by UNRA. Empower local governments to adequately utilise and maintain road reserves," he said.

Njeru municipal council mayor Resty Nanteza urged UNRA to consider alternative pedestrian road crossing options such as footbridges, saying it would reduce the alarming road carnage.

Katabi town council mayor Ronald Kalema asked UNRA to fill the two big trenches resultant from the Kampala-Entebbe Expressway road works, saying they are death traps.

He also said there is need for a flyover and humps at Abayita-Ababiri.

Kampala Metropolitan Police traffic commandant Israel Wambesyo decried encroachment of Kalerwe market into the highway, saying it has interrupted traffic flow. He asked UNRA to accelerate its sensitisation campaign.

UNRA director of road infrastructure protection Reuben Byaruhanga, remarked that UNRA is customer-centric, with plans to deliver 20,000km of world class roads by 2025. The country's world class road network currently stands at 6,000 kilometres.

Byaruhanga disclosed that the new regulations will streamline advertising on road reserves, with fees to range from sh500,000 to sh2m. He said UNRA would liaise with local governments for an agreed position on implementation.

"Offenders will have to pay express penalty depending on the tonnage."

Ssejemba