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"Integrity Is Our Driving Force"



Not all driving instructors deserve your hard-earned cash!

Dear New Drivers,

Please read this before you decide which driving school to attend. There are many pitfalls when you select a school. Remember, the Driving School industry is unfortunately still not regulated.

SAIDI is constantly asked to assist members of the public who have trustingly paid over money to people claiming to be "driving instructors", only to lose all the money or part thereof, or to have such a horrific experience that they want to leave, urgently.

Here are some actual extracts from emails received from members of the public. Personal details have been removed for privacy:

1. "When I first started out with them I got a instructor named XXX. I was happy with her services, but then suddenly my lessons were given to another lady who made me terrified, stalled the car, blocked my rear view mirror and made me very scared. Then called me a special client and suggested I just buy my licence."
2. Ms. XXX informed me of this matter as she felt aggrieved due to the fact that after discussing the matter with XXX she was informed that XXX driving school no longer has any records related to the contract in question; did not retain proof of the lessons which she did receive and that the instructor XXX is no longer employed there.

XXX further informed me that according to XXX, since the organisation is unable to provide her with the requested documents, XXX should either try and get hold of XXX and hope that she remembers how many lessons were actually given or XXX would have to pay for news lessons.

3. I contacted XXX Driving Academy in XXX to book and take my son for his Learners test. Yesterday, they contacted me at around 06:00 to inform me that they are unable to take my son for his test due to a broken vehicle and that I had to take him. I had paid them R850 up to this point and I was in no position to take him anyway. Upon my response, I was told by the Driving Academy that I approached them for their service and that it is my problem now. First of all, they advertised their services and that's why I contacted them – after all, if

you advertise, you expect responses. No attempt from the Driving Academy has been made to arrange alternative dates. I hope that you can assist and please investigate this particular Driving Academy's ethics.

4. It is so sad that I only learned about this institution now. I have been struggling to obtain closure or resolution with the matter that I have. I was referred to XXX DRIVING INSTITUTE by a friend. I met with XXX and agreed on a payment of R4500 which was going to cover for all costs for me to obtain a code 8 drivers license. We met last around August, I paid the money in two separate instalments of R2500 and R2000, I received only a receipt for the first payment, with no stamp or the company letter head. I did not receive a receipt for the last payment. I have never received no joy nor a single lesson though I paid R4500. Promises were made that I will be refunded in full. Until today I have never received anything. Later last year I took Mr. XXX to the small claims court. The judgment was granted in my favour but he never showed up to court or even bothered to pay me back. (case number XXX). I really need help or light as to where I can take this matter to. XXX DRIVING INSTITUTE is robbing people of their hard earned money and this is unfair. SAIDI, please help me.

Quite frankly, it happens so often that we are quite cynical about it,

doubting or contemptuous of human nature or the motives, goodness, or sincerity of others who bring our industry into disrepute. Despite referring them to every possible authority, no-one took action to assist these people or the hundreds of others we have received. In most cases, receipts were not issued either, so there is little or no recourse.

Sadly, this can mean in some cases that they also lose their one chance of becoming a legal driver.

Definition of fraud:

In South Africa, fraud is defined as the unlawful and intentional misrepresentation which can lead to actual or potential disadvantage to another individual or group. The use of the term is in its widest possible meaning and is intended to include all aspects of economical crime and acts of dishonesty.

The most vulnerable are the previously disadvantaged people, who are sometimes unworldly and not used to standard business practises, and are therefore not able to resist these "fly-by-nights" who prey on them by waiting at bus stops with a piece of cardboard claiming to be "instructors."



SAIDI is not authorised to stop these practises,

although we have been successful at times in assisting victims of corrupt driving instructors. If we were, we would be working full-time stamping these practises out on a voluntary basis.

Sometimes we have been able to help though.

Here is an email received from grateful members of the public who had fallen into the trap of one such instructor:

Hi,

I do not have words to appreciate what you have done for us. Our country needs people like you. You did not know us but the tremendous support you give us was overwhelming. Corruption is a serious crime threatening social and economic development. Zero – tolerance stance against corruption in all its forms is every individual responsibility. Corruption tarnishes all that is good in our society and eats away at the fabric of our democracy.

May God bless you and your organisation and give you strength. Honesty and integrity in doing your business must be your guiders.

God bless you.

(Name withheld for privacy.)

What a heart-warming letter of appreciation!

Another trap for the unsuspecting public one often sees, are pieces of paper tacked to trees in towns and cities, with contact numbers for driving schools.

Adverts are usually cut into little fringes. What is amazing and tragic, is that these little strips of paper have been torn off, and taken home by hopeful learner drivers. Every strip can indicate that someone is about to be robbed. This practise has been going on forever!

Do not become a victim of a dishonest person trying to steal your money!

Until the driving school industry is regulated, there is unfortunately little recourse.

Some people almost deserve to lose their money. Despite all our warnings, they think cheap lessons will serve basically the same purpose as professional driving instruction.

This is definitely not true! *Many* legal driving instructors, particularly SAIDI members, are committed to ensure that each client receives the very best possible tuition, have been highly trained with many years of experience, and have voluntarily and willingly complied with legislation on an annual basis. We strongly recommend that you support these businesses, even if it does cost a little more. Driving instruction is not the place to cut corners.

Legal instructors invest in new, roadworthy vehicle/s, pay heavily loaded insurance premiums, due to the nature of the work, cover astronomical fuel costs, services, maintenance, wear and tear, tyres and new clutches due to damage inflicted by inexperienced drivers, despite the best tuition, signage, as well as administration costs to provide your learner driver with the best possible service. Add the cost of offices and training grounds, and you can begin to see why legal instructors have an ongoing battle to survive against the hordes of fly-by-nights hanging around the Drivers Licence Testing Centres, dishing out business cards to each person who has just passed their learner's licence test.

Thinking "cheap" is a very dangerous way of thinking! It can mean unroadworthy vehicles, and no insurance in the event of an incident, bad "instructors" demanding that clients pay damages etc.

Want to read more?

1. What I do know is that XXX Driving School has been caught by the Metro Police for selling a driver's licence to a contact who agreed to be part of a sting operation. The case has repeatedly been postponed for 4 years when it comes to court.
2. They were permitted to place huge adverts at the entrances to XXX Testing centres misleading the public.
3. They employ unlicensed driving instructors such as an alcoholic, and a man just released from jail for assaulting his wife (therefore no police clearance on fingerprints will be passed, so he is not a legal instructor and has self-control issues, which should worry any learner driver.)
4. Their drunken instructor caused an accident on the freeway and jumped out blaming the teenager who had just passed his learner's licence and disappeared.
5. They have demanded large amounts to use their vehicle the night before the test and caused a lot of trouble and made people either pay or not do the test.
6. Their instructor apparently took a teenager to a strip club and brought them home at 10:30 at night from a driving lesson and they just carry on, and no-one does anything to stop it even when I report it to the National Department of Transport.

Dear Sir/Madam

I have had the unpleasant misfortune of having to deal with XXX Driving School viz.

I paid RXXX in October 2008 up front for a package of 10 lessons, test booking and use of their vehicle for the test for my son. Only 3 lessons were given and nothing further was done, despite my phoning/contacting them on a weekly basis to enquire as to what was going on. As the learner's licence was due to expire end May 2009, I organized a test date and more lessons myself with a different

(honest) driving school namely XXX, Pta. My son received lessons from them and passed the test. This obviously cost me a further few hundred Rand.

I have tried to get my money back from the XXX Driving School but they are rude and dishonest, lie continuously to me and make excuses, or refuse to speak to me, to answer emails or deposit the amount into my bank account. I really need this money and don't see why they should be left untouched whilst I am out of pocket due to their stealing, fraudulent actions.

Please pursue the matter on my behalf and make sure the money is refunded to me. I don't know how many other people have been conned in this way by them.

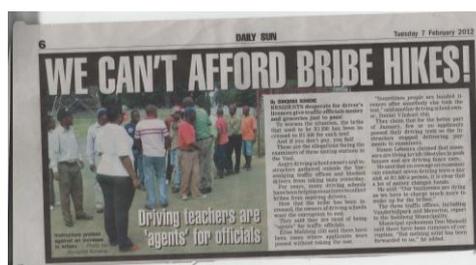
Thank you

HOW TO AFFORD GOOD DRIVING LESSONS AT A RELIABLE DRIVING SCHOOL:

If money is a major consideration, as it is for most of us, rather ask a reputable driving school to work out an affordable way to give you the very best standard of driver training, by telling them honestly what you can afford per month, then spreading it over a period of time to ensure thorough training, which instils confidence and excellent driving skills which last for a lifetime. This is an investment in your future. Don't underestimate its value. We are tired of people who ask for one lesson to learn the "tricks" to pass.

DON'T RESORT TO CRIME:

Unfortunately many people wait until they need a driving licence desperately, then they do anything, even paying for an illegal licence, just to get employment, for example.



BE PREPARED TO PAY FOR QUALITY:

Actually, it is difficult to understand the logic of parents who cheerfully paid for many years for extra-mural activities for their growing child, such as for piano lessons, which are admittedly very nice to have, but are certainly not life threatening, but when it is time for a driving licence, they will choose the cheapest, nastiest, sleaziest operation, just to save a few Rand.

Can they not see that this is putting their young adults at great risk? Do they even care? Are they the same parents who give fast sports cars to their new drivers for their image?

Conversely, other parents are deeply concerned and supportive of their offspring, paying for adequate driving lessons, and are very appreciative of everything the instructor teaches their applicant to do. We value such clients, and do our best to keep costs to a minimum.

In the first case, all we can do when they take that route is to stand back and let them go the cheap route.

Then we at SAIDI get desperate phone calls late at night when a daughter is still not home at 10 or 11 pm, because the driving instructor they selected, based on his low price, took her for drinks "to calm her nerves," or from parents who have lost thousands of Rand when the "instructor" changed his cell phone number and suddenly became "unavailable" or put the phone down when they demanded a refund, saying "I am not a bank!" We have *hundreds* of reports of corruption on file.

Some involve alcohol and drugs being used by instructors and their clients.



A mother has reported a case to us of a "driving instructor" jumping out of the "driving school vehicle" on the freeway between Johannesburg and Pretoria, because he had just caused a crash, due to being intoxicated, leaving her son alone with the wreck, until the Police and tow-truck people came to the scene.

We are talking about your young adult's life here! This is very serious. There are *no shortcuts* to learning to drive well. Defensive driving is the *minimum* level of safety for every driver. The following photographs, courtesy of the Justice Project South Africa, (JPSA), display graphically what the results can be of a low standard of driver training. We frequently see driving instructors not wearing seatbelts!



The moment of impact...



The driver was wearing a seatbelt...



The passenger was not wearing a seatbelt...



Less than a second after impact.

If you are already the victim of one of these “driving schools” who bring our industry into disrepute, there is very little that can be done to help you.

Three options are suggested:

1. Complainants should firstly lay charges against the driving school concerned, if they have paid for a service and never received it.
2. Secondly, they can report the matter to the Consumer Council for action.
3. Thirdly, they can expose the matter through the media.

That is why SAIDI exists. SAIDI members have voluntarily become members who comply with our Code of Conduct.

Our motto is *"Integrity is our Driving Force."*

See our membership pages to select a legal instructor in your area. If the driving school you are considering attending does not yet belong to SAIDI, why not ask them to consider joining? We welcome them all, provided they meet our criteria for registration. However, that said, you would be very surprised to know how many would-be applicants vanish because they do not have valid instructor's certificates, despite running driving schools with impunity for years.

At SAIDI, we only accept legal driving instructors as members, right across the country, to serve clients of all ethnic groups in their first language.

We also assist responsible unregistered instructors to qualify to improve the service they provide. We support them, to provide you with a safer option. Feel free to tell them about our training workshops. (See Benefits.)

We wish you a very happy, legal “learning to drive experience”, and trust that defensive driving is something you understand, and apply at all times when driving.

Please set a good example always. South Africa needs more drivers who do!