Standardisation of heavy vehicle crash investigation procedures in South Africa

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ABSTRACT:
South Africa's road safety rate ranks fourth worst in the world, however very little is done to correct the existing problem. Currently in South Africa and in the other parts of the continent and the world, only limited statistics are available regarding accidents involving heavy vehicles and even less is known about the real cause of these accidents. This paper reports on the findings of a study on the status of heavy vehicle accident investigation procedures in South Africa. This study involved a literature review of various heavy vehicle accidents procedures employed by various authorities from different countries, including identifying gaps in South Africa and other countries. Research indicates that there are many interlinked factors that contribute to a freight accident. Comprehensive road accident investigation procedures, will lead to the availability of reliable road accident data. This is crucial because effective road safety interventions require that contributory factors like road and traffic characteristics, vehicle parameters, and information about people involved in the accident be registered correctly in a proper data base. This will assist road engineers and transport planners during their intervention. To improve road safety it is recommended that standardisation in the training of the responsible investigating officials and proper definition of responsible officials for heavy vehicle accident investigations (SAPS officers, Metro police officers and traffic police officers) are implemented.