



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: CX Zwane
Telephone: 060 542 1108
Reference: 6/2/2/6

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 3537

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 27 OCTOBER 2023
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 38)

3537. Mr Y Tetyana (EFF) to ask the Minister of Water and Sanitation:

With reference to the significant public health risks associated with the poor state of some of the wastewater treatment works, what specific measures has his department taken to prevent public health risks, such as the Bloemhof tragedy, from occurring in the future?

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MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION

Raw water is drawn from rivers and dams and treated in Water Treatment Works; the treated water is required by law to meet drinking water standards set by the South African Bureau of Standards in South African National Standard (SANS) 241. Municipalities and water boards are also required to conduct regular tests on the treated water to ensure that it complies with the standard and submit the tests results to Integrated Regulatory Information System (IRIS) where the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) monitors compliance to these standards.

The Bloemhof tragedy in the North West Province occurred due to contamination of drinking water. In terms of SANS241 and the norms and standards issued by DWS under the Water Services Act, when the tests carried out by a municipality indicate that the water supplied poses a health risk, the municipality must inform its consumers that the quality of the water that it supplies poses a health risk.

The Department has revived the Blue Drop and Green Drop Certification programmes to intensify monitoring of municipal service provision by ensuring that the entire value chain is assessed. The results of the Blue and Green Drops Watch Reports released by DWS earlier in July 2023 also indicate that further legislative reforms may be required to ensure that water service providers are professionally managed, capable, efficient and financially viable

institutions. The DWS is in the process of consulting with water sector stakeholders regarding such reforms.

The DWS is supporting and intervening in many municipalities across the country to improve water and sanitation services. The Minister has agreed on improvement plans with Mayors, and the Department is assisting the municipalities with grant funding to address infrastructure deficits. The DWS, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the Water Boards also provide support to the municipalities with technical expertise and management support.


Additionally, the Department is in the process of strengthening its role as the regulator of water services. This includes developing more comprehensive and more stringent norms and standards for water services and standardising its regulatory processes and actions so that they are implemented more consistently. It is anticipated that these Standards will be published for comment at the end of November 2023.

The discharge of treated wastewater into a resource is only allowed in terms of an authorisation issued under the National Water Act, which provides site specific conditions and effluent quality limits. This has a rippling effect on public health, as it aims to prevent pollution of the water resource. The Department monitors compliance to the water use authorisation conditions, through site inspections and effluent quality results submitted on IRIS.


The DWS issues compliance notices and directives where Municipalities are non-compliant instructing them to correct the situation. Failure to comply to directives is a criminal offence in terms of the National Water Act and the Department, upon conducting criminal investigations, then submits to the National Prosecution Authority for a decision to prosecute.

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DRAFT REPLY: RECOMMENDED/ ~~NOT RECOMMENDED~~/ ~~AMENDED~~


DR SEAN PHILLIPS
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
DATE: 24/11/23

DRAFT REPLY: APPROVED/ ~~NOT APPROVED~~/ ~~AMENDED~~


MR SENZO MCHUNU, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION
DATE: 3/12/23