



INTERNET ARTICLE

Minister Majodina calls for municipalities to ensure readiness for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project shutdown

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Water and Sanitation Minister Pemmy Majodina has called on Free State municipalities to be ready for the shutdown of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) tunnel in the next two weeks. Majodina called for the affected municipalities to expedite plans to continue to provide water to during the shutdown. The LHWP tunnel will undergo maintenance from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The Minister engaged with the Executive Mayors of Thabo Mofutsanyana and Fezile Dabi District Municipalities in Bethlehem, Free State, yesterday. She was accompanied by Deputy Minister David Mahlobo, Deputy Minister of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation Seiso Mohai, and Free State MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Saki Mokoena,

The six-months shutdown will jointly be undertaken by the Lesotho Highlands Development Agency (LHDA, which operates and maintains Lesotho section of the LHWP tunnel system, and the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) responsible for operation and maintenance of the section within the Republic of South Africa.

The tunnel system requires general inspections, and repair works to be conducted at approximately five years intervals to ensure the integrity and reliability of the entire water tunnel system. As a result of the tunnel shutdown, 700 million m³ per annum will be transferred in 2024, resulting in a shortfall of 80 million m³ from the normal annual transfer volume.

However, the Department of Water and Sanitation has embarked on relief interventions for municipalities along the Caledon River, Wilge River, Vaal River and Rhenoster River. The interventions include the upgrading of water treatment works, upgrading of raw water pumps, upgrading of abstraction works, the construction of new reservoirs as well as the development of groundwater resources by drilling and equipping boreholes.

All of these projects are under way, but some of the municipalities are behind schedule with the implementation of the projects. Where necessary, the Department of Water and Sanitation will intervene to support these municipalities to complete these projects which are critical in ensuring sustainable water supply to communities during the tunnel system shutdown.

“It is important to note that during this outage, there will be no water deliveries from Lesotho to South Africa. It is therefore important for municipalities to ensure that water security measures are maintained and various water enforcements mechanisms like water restrictions are applied by the municipalities. Although some municipalities are still lagging behind in terms of their readiness, we as the Department, are giving them the support that they need”, said Majodina.

Sanku Tsunke

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