

Vandalism disadvantages the most vulnerable communities

The Department of Water and Sanitation in Free State would like to condemn in strongest terms the vandalism of water infrastructure as seen in some parts of the province.

The department has learnt with much shock the vandalism of some water tanks that have been delivered in some areas as part of Covid-19 interventions.

Vandalism of water infrastructure is amongst the worst offences being perpetrated by some

criminal elements in our respective communities and this act has dire consequences as it causes interruption in water supply.

To date, the Department of Water and Sanitation has rolled out a total of 1 991 water tanks to various municipalities throughout the province as part of government's efforts to reduce the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. This is in line with World Health Organisation's advice that the regular washing of hands with soap will

reduce the spread of coronavirus.

Whilst community members are encouraged to wash their hands regularly with soap the department would like to urge water users to do so without wastage and save as much water as possible.

Free State provincial head Dr Tseliso Ntuli says those who vandalise water infrastructure should face the full might of the law and not be spared of any harsh sentence.

He argued that the water tanks are especially critical at the moment given the spike in Covid-19 positive cases. DWS utilise plastic taps instead of copper taps intentionally to deter theft, but these plastic taps have also come under attack.

According to Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 those found to have tampered, damaged or destroyed essential infrastructure should face a severe penalty such as imprisonment of up to 30 years. This includes those who collude with

or assist another person in tampering, damaging or destroying essential infrastructure. In the case of a corporate body as contemplated in section 332(2) of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977, a fine not exceeding R100 million will be imposed.

Communities should remain forever vigilant and report any forms of vandalism to the local police as most criminal elements that commit these crimes are members of the very same community. The department also implores all communities to take charge of the infrastructure provided to them and ensure its safety.

**Department of Water & Sanitation
Free State**