



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# MEDIA STATEMENT

## Emergency work on the 4<sup>th</sup> dam in Riverlands

18 August 2024

On Saturday, 17 August 2024, the Department of Water (DWS) and Sanitation emptied Dam 4 upstream of Riverlands residents by means of a side channel spillway.

The reason for this was to prevent a more catastrophic collapse of the dam wall. The department established that there is a progressing piping failure (on the downstream slope) at the highest section of the dam wall during an inspection on the 12th of August 2024. The integrity of the Dam was compromised and hence the possibility of failure was detected. Subsequently, the decision was taken to empty the dam to protect the lives of the community members living downstream.

The emptying of the dam through the spillway was planned to drain the dam during daytime (from 10h00 to 16h00) to ensure that the increased outflow from the dam would occur during day light, to enable it to be managed more easily.

Should Dam 4 have failed late in the evening or early morning hours while the public downstream was asleep, the consequences could have been far worse.

Dam 4 emptied faster than anticipated, however, the public was precautionarily evacuated and hence no injuries and loss of life were reported. The members of the public who were evacuated have returned to their homes.

The dam wall of Dam 4 has not failed. Very little additional damage was caused by the release of water from Dam 4. The damage to infrastructure was caused by the floods of the dam breaks of the previous three dams during the early hours of last week.

The Department of Water and Sanitation remains committed to safeguard the lives of the public during emergency conditions although this sometimes results in difficult decisions having to be taken including the precautionary evacuation of people if deemed necessary.

**END**

Issued jointly by the Department of Water & Sanitation and Swartland Local Municipality

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