



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# MEDIA STATEMENT

## Avoid overflowing rivers and prioritise water safety this Easter Weekend

For immediate release

**16 April 2025**

As the Easter holidays approach, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is appealing to all South Africans, particularly religious leaders and communities planning gatherings near water bodies, to be extra cautious and adhere to water safety measures to prevent drowning incidents.

Recent heavy rainfall across the country has caused water levels in rivers and dams to rise rapidly, creating hazardous conditions. Of particular concern are the Vaal and Bloemhof dams, where ongoing water management measures are in place to ensure infrastructure safety and reduce flood risk.

During Easter, it is customary for many communities to gather near natural water bodies for spiritual and religious rituals such as baptisms. While the Department fully respects the right to religious expression, public safety remains of paramount importance. Entering fast-flowing or swollen rivers puts lives at serious risk, especially when the depth, strength of the current, and presence of underwater debris are unknown and unpredictable.

Overflowing rivers may appear calm on the surface but can conceal powerful undercurrents capable of sweeping people away in seconds. Even experienced swimmers can be caught off guard by the force of water, submerged objects, and slippery riverbanks. The Department strongly encourages religious groups and individuals to seek alternative, safer ways to conduct these practices during this high-risk period.

In addition to cautioning against religious activities in natural water sources, the Department reminds holidaymakers to avoid visiting dams or rivers while under the influence of alcohol and to always supervise children near water bodies.

The Department further emphasises the importance of avoiding construction of settlements within designated floodlines, as this increases vulnerability during extreme weather and high-water events.

DWS remains committed to protecting both lives and infrastructure through proactive management, public awareness, and collaboration with local authorities, and continues to monitor dam levels closely.

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Department of Water and Sanitation South Africa



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“Let us work together to make this Easter a safe and joyous time for all. We call on communities, faith leaders, and families to stay informed, stay vigilant, and choose safety first. If your celebration involves water, think twice and choose life,” said Wisane Mavasa, DWS spokesperson.

**END**

**Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation**

**For more information, contact Wisane Mavasa, Spokesperson for the Department of Water and Sanitation on 060 561 8935**

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