



INTERNET ARTICLE

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DWS calls for ease on water use as the Vaal Dam drops to critical levels

The rapid decline of levels of the Vaal Dam could spell a disaster for water supply for Gauteng if drastic measures are not taken to change patterns of water consumption.

A few years ago the country experienced the most devastating drought that saw Gauteng impose restrictions as levels of the Vaal Dam hovered around 25% and lower, thus requiring the release of water from the reserve Sterkfontein Dam in the Free State to replenish the Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS), inclusive of the Vaal Dam.

Going forward, those hard times should be avoided at all costs. To make sure that we do not see a repeat of this, an obligation should be placed on changing behaviour towards our limited water resources. This, however, is not a magic wand to address the challenge of declining dam levels as this is partly due to erratic rainfall in the catchment areas, and the dry winter season that is currently upon the country.

Now for the first time in years, the Vaal Dam has again dropped to below the 50% mark. This is a tell-tale sign that not all is well. For instance, the Vaal Dam has over the months recorded a decline week-on-week and now stands at 42.6%. By all accounts, this is a cause for concern that is not only limited to the Vaal Dam but extends to other dams such as Mohale and Katse in Lesotho, within the Integrated Vaal River System; these currently stand at 8.0% and 31.0% respectively.

DWS's Gauteng Provincial Head, Sibusiso Mthembu, said the managing of water demand is one of the ways we could drastically improve the levels of water in our dams and therefore avert a full blown water crisis.

He implored behavioural change on the part of water consumers, saying this was at the heart of ensuring that water resources are protected such that taps are kept running.

Mthembu added that residents should be acutely aware that South Africa remains one of the driest countries in the world and that in order to be in a safe place there was a need for consistent rainfalls over long periods in summer.



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He also cited the impact of climate change as contributing to the erratic weather conditions and that this was exacerbating water shortages even further.

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