



INTERNET ARTICLE

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SA water levels dropping but no need to panic

Although South Africa's dam levels have dropped substantially since the beginning of the season it is not all doom and gloom as this is normal during this period of the year, as the rainfall season for the inland provinces ended four months ago already.

Despite the drop however, there is 21 409,5 cubic metres (60%) in volume of water that is stored in reservoirs across the country to prepare against any eventuality before the first summer rains in about two months. The envisaged downpours are expected to boost the dam levels substantially, bringing relief to stressed regions.

According to the latest weekly report by the Department of Water and Sanitation, the country's dam levels have been dropping at an average one percent week-on-week since the beginning of the winter season.

Free State continues to lead the pack with the largest volumes of water at 78,2% that is stored in its facilities. The province boasts some of the biggest dams in the country that have the capacity to sustain its water users across the region. Sterkfontein Dam remains stable at 93,9% and when the need arises its water is pumped to other dams to enhance the volume in the Integrated Vaal River System, only when there is a need.

The weekly report reflects Gauteng levels at 97,9%. The figure is reflective of its fewer and smaller dams that fill up quickly with the smallest rainfall. Bon Accord Dam, north of Pretoria is bursting at the seams after recording 104,8% while Rietvlei Dam on the outskirts of the city is almost full at 99,8% .

Northern Cape, another province with the fewest dams, lies third on the table at 92,8%. The province relies almost exclusively on the Orange River as its main water resource to supply agricultural, industrial and domestic users.

According to the weekly report, the province has stored 136,8 (70%) cubic metres of water in its reservoirs. Limpopo is holding out at 61,6% with Rust De Winter on the south east of the province recording 100% while Rhenosterkop is overflowing at 100,3%. However, the situation remains gloomy in Mopani District as the Tzaneen, Middel-Letaba and Nsami dams remain below 20% each.

The water situation in Mpumalanga is fairly satisfactory at 69,2%. The recent scorching temperatures have had little effect on water levels that are normally





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affected adversely by evaporation. Witbank Dam on the Highveld is teetering on full capacity at 96,4% while Middleburg Dam is stable at 88,7%.

The situation in North West is also satisfactory at 67,2% although dam levels slid marginally from 67,7% to 67,2% this week. However, Madibeng townships of Mothuthung, Letlhabile, Jericho and Maboloka are faced with water challenges after the municipality embarked on a water-rationing exercise to save the precious resource.

Last week's snowfall in Eastern Cape has helped to stabilise the water situation in the province's as the ice melted into water. Two weeks ago the provincial dam levels were threatening to slide to below 50% which sparked fears of possible water shortages in drought-stricken regions.

The scarcity of rain in KwaZulu-Natal has caused dam levels in the province to drop by almost 2% from 58% to 56,7% in the past week. Zululand towns such as Ulundi, and UMkhanyakude District are on the receiving end of water scarcity.

The Western Cape is the only province whose dams are rising exponentially, thanks to the winter rains that continue to pound most regions. In the past week alone the province recorded a 3% increase in dam levels from 74,2% to 77,3%.

The Department of Water and Sanitation has renewed its appeal for water users across the spectrum to continue to save water by using it wisely and sparingly to sustain the country until the next summer rains.

By Themba Khumalo

