



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### **DWS Blue Scorpions nabs water crimes to prevent pollution and improve drinking water quality in SA**

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In its continuous efforts to enhance the delivery of good quality drinking water, the Department of Water and Sanitation has reiterated its commitment to enforce compliance and implement legislative measures to address water pollution across the country.

This is through the work being carried out by the Green Scorpions, who are members of the Environmental Management Inspectorate and are working to prevent and curb the extent of water pollution.

“The Green Scorpions have a wide range of powers and functions and are empowered to investigate and effect arrests for water crimes,” said Siboniso Mkhalihi, Acting Chief Director in the Department’s Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement unit.

The Department has admitted that the main source of pollution comes from wastewater treatment works (WWTWs) due to sewer blockages, poor operations and maintenance as well as pollution from mining operations resulting in problems of acid mine drainage, particularly in mining provinces.

According to Mkhalihi, since 2014, the Department’s Green Scorpions have investigated a total of 598 cases related to dysfunctional WWTWs which were mainly as a result of complaints received from the public.

He said enforcement actions were taken by the Department against municipalities which were found to have violated the water legislation in relation to WWTWs. “Enforcement actions taken include administrative, civil and criminal actions,” Mkhalihi said.

He added that the Department embarks on legal processes as a last resort and only takes legal action after numerous attempts to persuade and compel the municipalities to rectify their non-compliances.

Mkhalihi added that since 2014 to date, the Department has taken enforcement actions against municipalities which include opening of five criminal cases which have been registered with the South African Police Services (SAPS) and are still under criminal investigation, issuing of 148 notices of intention to issue a directive, as well as issuing of 74 directives and two court interdicts being granted in favour of the Department.

Furthermore, to address ageing municipal waste water infrastructure and poor operation and maintenance, the Department is working with the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA) to ensure that WWTWs that are dysfunctional or in disrepair are urgently repaired.

“We also partnering with SAPS, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) as well as the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development to ensure that water related crimes receive necessary attention





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in terms of urgency and penalties. A training programme is also underway to capacitate SAPS and NPA on the National Water Act,” Mkhalihi said.

Some of the measures also include a training programme for Environmental Management Inspectors (Green Scorpions) to build internal capacity and a joint operation committee with Eskom to ensure that coal is sourced from compliant mines.

The Department has further maintained that the reinstatement of the Blue and Green Drop Certification Programmes which call for excellent drinking water and wastewater quality management will help improve the quality of water supplied to residents and ensure that the state of wastewater treatment and water infrastructure at municipal level are up to standard.

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