



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## INTERNET ARTICLE

### DWS in Gauteng join forces in cleaning-up Alexander for Mandela Day

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Celebrated annually, Mandela Day is held on 18th July in honour of Former President Nelson Mandela. On this day, South Africa and countries around the world join hands to commemorate this day by dedicating 67 minutes of their time to volunteer their services to communities. The Department of Water and Sanitation in Gauteng did exactly that and joined forces with members of Alexandra community on a clean-up campaign on the streets and malls of the township, and at Alexander Heritage Site.

The campaign was also joined by the City of Johannesburg, Pick n Pay, Raise of Hope, the Alexander Peace Ambassadors, Water and Sanitation Forum, the Alex Rotarians and the Alex Men's Forum.

This year, Mandela Day comes at a time when we are faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recent looting of shopping complexes and malls and unrest.

"In the wake of widespread violence, resulting in looting and wanton destruction, the words of Nelson Mandela resonate deeply at this moment: 'It is easy to break down and destroy. The heroes are those who make peace and build'.

The recent looting and protests have devastated parts of South Africa with many infrastructure, restaurants, cafes and businesses destroyed. It is without a doubt that our country is in crisis as we continue to experience this chaos of looting and vandalism.

The government has called on all South Africans to unite in creating a better future for all by resisting any attempts to incite violence, create panic or fuel divisions after days of looting and violence. South Africans from all walks of life are taking to social media to start or join groups to begin cleaning up and rebuilding towns affected by the violence and looting seen across the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in the past few days.

Ms Reshoketswe Malepe, from Gauteng DWS's Water Services Support said these initiatives will prevent the waste into storm drains and to run into our rivers, wetlands and dams. Anything dumped or dropped on the ground or in the gutter can end up in the nearest body of water.

"Stormwater pollution results from materials and chemicals washed into the storm drains from streets, gutters, neighbourhoods, industrial sites, parking lots and construction sites. This type of pollution is significant because, unlike the water that goes down a sink or toilet in your home, stormwater is untreated and flows directly to a lake, river, or the dam," said Ms Malepe.

She further said that it is important that we play our part in protecting water resources. Access to water is a huge problem for billions of people and this needs a huge solution which can only come by joining of hands. Therefore, it is imperative for small groups of local community members and leaders, youth-based organisations to work together.

“Polluted water is unsafe and unhealthy for people and animals to drink or to wash in. In South Africa the scarce fresh water is decreasing in quality because of an increase in pollution and the destruction of river catchments, caused by urbanisation, deforestation, destruction of wetlands, industry, mining, agriculture, energy use, and accidental water pollution. As the human population increases, there is an increase in pollution and catchment destruction.” continued Ms Malepe.

Mandela Day resonates with people globally. It is an opportunity to honour Madiba’s legacy and vision with a commitment to 67 minutes of community service. Inspired by Nelson Mandela’s example, the call is simple: take action and inspire change, in a way that acknowledges his 67-year struggle for social and economic justice in our country.

“It is for this reason that Department of Water and Sanitation connects South Africans to their sources of water, which is crucial for water secure future through the Clear River Campaign. This campaign is done annually, where citizens are called to clean up rivers and water ecosystems as part of dedicating their 67 minutes of goodwill during Mandela Month,” said Ms Malepe.

A member of the Alex Peace Ambassadors, Mr Thabo Mopasi said we can all play our part in living Mandela’s legacy by committing ourselves to a life and philosophy of service and volunteerism, giving our time and energy in some small way each day that can make a difference to the lives of others.

“There is no doubt that the practical act of volunteering makes important economic and social contributions to all spheres of society. It not only provides direct support to individual community projects, national development initiatives and environmental programmes, but also has the power to contribute to the building of a more cohesive society by building trust and acknowledging the power of giving back amongst citizens,” concluded Mr Mopasi.

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