



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### **DWS Mpumalanga officials reminded of the importance of health and safety in the workplace**

01 November 2022

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) Mpumalanga Provincial Operations celebrated Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Month with an intensive occupational health and safety and wellness programme throughout the month of October.

The intensive educational and awareness celebration programme involved all offices of the Department under Mpumalanga, starting with the Mbombela Provincial office on 11 October, followed by the Lydenburg office on 13 October, Bronkhorstspuit office on 19 October and closing off the programme at the Groblersdal office on 27 October 2022.

The Occupational Health and Safety Officer in the Mpumalanga Provincial Office, Mr Zakhele Mbokane outlined the importance of celebrating OHS Month.

“In looking at the impacts and implications caused by COVID-19, the OHS committee felt that it will be necessary to host the OHS & Wellness Day to refresh and stimulate the minds of the employees and remind them about the importance of health and safety in the workplace. Another critical part of the educational awareness celebrations is to promote health and safety within the Provincial Operations, whereby management and employees are brought together to share best practices regarding health and safety in the workplace”, he said.

Mental health is important for safety in the workplace it was incorporated in the OHS Month programme to ensure that the health of the Department's officials is attended and addressed in a holistic manner. Mental health is also important to minimise mistakes in the workplace. The 10th October 1992 was declared as World Mental Health Day which serves as an international day for global mental health education, awareness, and advocacy against social stigma.

“Leaving your house & returning back safely is such an underrated blessing therefore as the OHS & Wellness team we are hereby saying let's work together to build a positive health and safety culture”, stated Mr Mbokane.

The highlight of the Mpumalanga OHS celebrations was the Groblersdal closing awareness event which started with a health walk and included a snake awareness session. Mr Arthur Roden explained what to do in case you find yourself face to face with a snake. The snake awareness was very crucial, especially as there are officials who spend most of their time out in the field.

Officials were also reminded of the importance of handwashing as the most effective and cost-efficient way of preventing the spread of germs and diseases. Mr Richard Mbambo, the Regional Sanitation Manager explained the importance of Global Handwashing Day which is celebrated annually on 15 October, and Ms Lomina Shongwe took the colleagues through the correct and proper steps of handwashing.



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The educational awareness celebration included outside stakeholders who presented and made demonstrations on critical topics related to workplace health and safety. The stakeholders included NOSA and Kishugu presenting on health and safety in the workplace, Department of Employment and Labour presenting on the OHS Act and COIDA, Department of Health on mental health and other diseases, Working on Fire on veld fires and fire safety, Working on Fire, City of Tshwane and Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality presented on fire awareness and safety, Old Mutual and Metropolitan assisted the officials in financial planning and management.

Doctors on Call were also there attending to the physical and medical side of the officials' health needs and providing health screening and eye testing to ensure that the officials are in good health conditions.

The OHS Month celebrations were a reminder of the importance of health and safety in the workplace. It was a reminder to all officials to always take their health and safety seriously.

Mr Johnny Nwaila, representing organised labour thanked the organisers for organising the educational awareness sessions. He encouraged the officials to take health and safety in the workplace seriously. He further promised that the unions will always support employees to ensure safe and healthy working conditions.

**Themba Khoza**

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