

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 527

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(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 10)

527. Mr M M Swathe (DA) to ask the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry:

- (1) With reference to her statement in the National Assembly on 11 March 2008, (a) where are the locations of the sites that make up the figure of (i) 94% of sites of sampled drinking water that complied with health standards and (ii) 6% of sites that did not comply with health standards and (b) over what period was the abovementioned sampling done;
- (2) (a) where are the 142 high risk sites also referred to in her statement in the National Assembly and (b) what is the nature of the risk in each case? NW1171E

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REPLY:

- (1)(a)(i);
(1)(a)(ii)
and
(1)(b)

The 94% compliance level quoted in my statement was an average for monitoring from more than 3 200 sampling sites over a period of 13 months (2007-2008). In March 2008 alone 7 535 samples were analysed for 82 534 determinants of which only 1,9% failed to comply with the health aspects of the National Standard for drinking water quality. It should be noted that one sample can be tested for a whole host of determinants explaining the reason why a sample might be microbiologically safe and pose no health risk since only an operational limit such as pH was not met. More than half of the failures recorded in March 2008 were of operational value implying that attention should be given to treatment process control.

The following is a breakdown of the provincial compliance levels as far as drinking water quality is concerned on a monthly basis (March 2008 example):

Province	Number of samples	Number of Determinants Analysed	% Failures
Limpopo	642	22 829	2
Western Cape	1 463	1 108	3,5
Eastern Cape	1 243	441	7,7
Northern Cape	938	392	3,8
Free State	589	2 081	2,5
KwaZulu-Natal	750	10 700	1,9
North West	366	5 170	1
Gauteng	1 063	33 588	0,4
Mpumalanga	481	6 225	5,7
NATIONAL	7 535	82 534	1,9

The average of 6% health failures recorded over the past year was recorded from various sampling sites especially in rural areas where no filtration is applied prior to distribution.

I officially communicated the unwanted situation with Mayors of Municipalities where health failures persistently occurred.

- (2)(a) The 142 high risk sites were referring to waste-water treatment facilities and not drinking water treatment works. The Water Research Commission and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry have studied a number of waste-water treatment facilities and identified the high risk works based on the level of compliance with legislative limits and the quality of volumes discharged into our resources.
- (2)(b) In all of these cases the lack of infrastructure refurbishment and proper asset management is a cause for huge concern.