



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WATER AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

2011 -10- 14

PRIVATE BAG X313
PRETORIA 0001

Enquiries: Mr M. Matlala
Telephone: 012-336-7860
Reference: 2/1/5/1

MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS


NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES: QUESTION 403 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above question by Mr M W Makhubela (COPE-Limpopo) is attached for your consideration.


ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 18/10/2011.

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DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED


MRS B E E MOLEWA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: 2011/10/19

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 403

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 16 SEPTEMBER 2011
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 29)

403. Mr M W Makhubela (COPE-Limpopo) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) Whether the Government has a policy regarding acceptable and safe levels of uranium in water that is fit for human consumption; if not, why not; if so, (a) what is the international standard for safe levels of uranium in water for human consumption, (b) what is the current level of uranium in water in the country and (c) what areas have higher than normal uranium levels in their water;
- (2) whether her department has taken any action to address this issue; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? CW502E

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REPLY:

- (1) Yes my Department adopted the South African National Standards for Drinking Water - SANS 241-1 (2011).
 - (1)(a) These standards were published in June 2011 and are in accordance with the World Health Organisation Guidelines. The acceptable concentration of uranium in potable water in SANS 241 is less or equal to 15 (fifteen) µg/litre.
 - (1)(b) Sampling commenced in 2006 and is still continuing as part of the National Radioactivity Monitoring Programme and for the period October 2010 to July 2011 70 samples were taken and the findings were as follows:
 - Lowest level: 0.14 µg/l
 - Highest level: 424 µg/l
 - Average level: 50.5 µg/l
 - Standard deviation: 83.6 µg/l
- It must be noted that these are levels in untreated "raw" water and not necessarily at a point of abstraction for drinking water.
- (c) The programme monitors 18 "hot spot" sites that are currently sampled every two months. These areas were selected as "hot spots" (areas with expected higher than normal uranium levels in the water) because of activities such as gold mining, and include sites in the middle Vaal, the Mooi River and Crocodile West Marico catchments. It also covers the entire Witwatersrand area as well as the Free State Goldfields.

- (2) According to the Blue Drop Programme (an incentive-based regulatory programme) administered by my Department, each municipality must have a water safety plan in place for the provision of drinking water which is of an acceptable quality. These plans are specific to every municipality and must make provision for the adequate monitoring of potential risk factors applicable to the area, including radioactivity and/or uranium levels. For example, Tlokwe Municipality monitors for uranium due to mining activities in the catchment, but current levels are far below the prescribed standard of 15 µg/litre.

Should a municipality identify a potential problem with regards to any aspect of the drinking water quality, appropriate mitigation measures as identified in the safety plan will be implemented.

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