



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



EdST

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MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 430 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above question asked by Mr. A Watson (DA) is attached for your consideration.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 06/03/2012

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

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

DATE: 2012/03/11

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 430

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 02 March 2012
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 06)

430. Mr A Watson (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) Whether, with reference to the flooding in Mpumalanga in January 2012, the management of dams in the province during the floods by the officials of the Department of Water was in line with the policies and prescriptions of her department; if not, what will be done to rectify the situation; if so, how was this conclusion reached;
- (2) (a) which dams upstream of the Thaba Chweu municipality were subjected to flood management procedures during the flood and (b) what were the relevant details of the steps taken in each case;
- (3) whether warnings were provided to communities likely to be affected downstream of actions to be taken to manage dams upstream of the Thaba Chweu municipality during the flood; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (4) whether any lessons were learnt during the recent flood that can be used to lessen flood damage in future; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

- (1) The dams operating rules were adhered to and all other precautionary measures were undertaken in anticipation of the forecast storm. Major dams in the affected Mpumalanga-Limpopo regions are the Injaka and Da Gama Dams along the Sabie River; Kwena Dam across the Crocodile River; and the Blyderivierpoort- and Klaserie Dams on relevant tributaries of the Olifants River. All these dams are designed to have ungated or uncontrolled spillways. After filling up to 100%, their effect in flood control becomes minimal. As it can be seen on the table below, all but the Kwena Dam were full and they were spilling already. They were then operating on a free flow mode and they had limited flood attenuating effect.

RIVER	DAM	LOCATION IN RELATION TO THABA CHWEU	LEVEL (%) BEFORE STORM	LEVEL (%) AFTER STORM
Sabie	Injaka	Downstream	100	100
	Da Gama	Downstream	100	100
Crocodile	Kwena	Remote	93	99
Olifants	Blyderivierpoort	Downstream	100	100
	Klaserie	Downstream	100	100
Sand	Witklip	Downstream	100	100

- (2)(a) There are no major Departmental dams upstream of the Thaba Chweu Municipality.
- (2)(b) The river flows were monitored and the Department's officials in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo regional offices kept the Disaster Management Forums at Tzaneen and Nelspruit informed on the state of river flows.
- (3) Based on the advice from the South African Weather Service and the Department, the Mpumalanga Provincial Disaster Management Centre issued general warnings to communities about the impending storm and the possibility of flooding. The warnings also covered the fact that most of the dams in the region were or near full capacity; hence, would not provide much protection from floods. There was no need to issue special warnings for the Thaba Chweu Municipality about the downstream effects of dam operations, as there are no major dams upstream of the municipality.
- (4) Knowledge and technology to predict flash floods is at an infancy stage. However, the Department is closely following developments in this area with the intention of using the technology when it becomes reliable, stable and is proven to minimise loss of life and damage to property. The flooding was a result of localised short-duration high intensity storms. The development of floods from such events is almost immediate (within 6 hours from the commencement of the rainfall event) and the resultant floods are known as flash floods.

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