



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### Infrastructure vandals beware!

16 May 2016

Infrastructure related crime has become a menace to society as it leaves entire communities without basic services like electricity, communication, water or sanitation. The South African Local Government Association (SALGA), reports that the “replacement value of water and sanitation infrastructure in South Africa cost R44 billion as of 2011”.

Any person who unlawfully and intentionally interferes with or damages a structure, facility or system that is used to provide an essential service to the public, if found guilty could face up to 30 years imprisonment. This is according to the Criminal Matters Amendment Act, 2015 (CMA, 2015) enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa.

The Bill seeks to amend the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977 and the Criminal Law Act of 1977 with the objective to regulate bail and sentences for infrastructure related offences.

The Bill further goes on to state that “any person who facilitates or assists anybody to commit an infrastructure related offence” is not off the hook; upon conviction, they face up to 30 years imprisonment. Often, those who are entrusted to guard and protect our infrastructure are the very ones who collude with criminals.

In rural areas, because the infrastructure is in close proximity to communities, chances of vandalism are high when compared to the urban context. According to the Bill “any person found on the premises of an infrastructure facility without a reasonable explanation is guilty of an offence and liable upon conviction to a minimum imprisonment of three (3) years. In urban areas, the scenario is different; the crime is more organized because ordinary citizens do not have easy access to infrastructure.

Communities need to take ownership of all infrastructures in general by protecting them and reporting vandals and criminals to law enforcement agencies. After all, it is the community that suffers when there is no water or other services

As part of the continuous education and awareness campaigns of the Department of Water and Sanitation, the protection of infrastructure is high on the agenda as we partner with communities to protect our water resources.

Some of the initiatives to eliminate theft and vandalism to infrastructure include robust community engagement through community forums which identify and report water and sanitation challenges in their areas and come up with solutions. The forums are also intended to instill in communities a culture of ownership of infrastructure by protecting it.

Water has no substitute...protect our water and sanitation infrastructure.

**NB:- The Criminal Matters Amendment Act, 2015, comes into effect on a date fixed by the President by proclamation in the Gazette.**

**END**



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**Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation**

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