



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### Recent rains have little impact on dam levels

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“South Africans must continue to save water despite the heavy rains that have fallen in the past months”, Deputy Director General: Emergency Projects, Trevor Balzer, said yesterday.

Speaking at a media briefing during a media tour at the Vaal Dam, Balzer warned that although the heavy downpours in most parts of the country have increased dam levels to at least 50,7%, this was a far cry from acceptable levels recorded in previous years. Dam levels have increased by a mere 1,9%.

“We have lost most of the water that we received through the rains to evaporation. At the height of the drought we have stored our water at Sterkfontein Dam than we did at the Vaal because, hydrologically, there is less evaporation at Sterkfontein”, Balzer said, emphasising that the situation justified the retention of 15% water restrictions imposed by municipalities in various parts of the country.

Generally speaking, water restrictions could not be reviewed unless the average dam levels rose to at least 70%. Some municipalities, however, were struggling to conserve water at the stipulated percentage because of non-compliance by various categories of water users.

“The water situation in the country has not changed from what it was in November 2016 and this is a matter for concern. The weather forecasters have predicted above-normal rainfalls in parts of South Africa but these are not expected to change the situation drastically. The dire situation calls for all citizens to continue using water wisely and sparingly”, Balzer said.

The department is monitoring about 211 dams throughout the country and some smaller dams have benefitted substantially from recent rains. Among these are Umtata, with 100,05%; Belfort, with 100%, both in Eastern Cape; Klerkskraal in North West, with 101,5%; Boegoeberg, with 104,8% in Northern Cape; Koppies, with 110,1% in Free State and Klipdrift North, with 104%.

Gauteng residents heaved a collective sigh of relief when the sluice gates at Sterkfontein Dam were dropped to allow a volume of 20 cubic metres per second water to flow into Vaal Dam in November last year.

Added to this scientific feat were the heavy downpours that fell in most parts of Gauteng recently. Hydrologists have warned us that the next three months would mark the arrival of above normal rainfalls in most parts of the country. In some cases, they said, heavy rains might result in flash floods.



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The volume at the Vaal rose gradually to reach its peak of 70 cubic metres per second at the beginning of December before the flow was reduced. The process was tapered off back to the initial 20 cubic metres per second and the transfer of water was ended on 22 December 2016.

**Themba Khumalo**