

NED building closed: PSA demands action from KZN Education over 'rat infestation, exposed wires'

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The NED building in Pietermaritzburg has been closed after an inspection by the Department of Labour, the KZN Education department has confirmed.

Image: Leon Lestrade / Independent Newspapers

The Public Servants Association (PSA) has called on the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to urgently prioritise employee safety following the closure of the NED Building in Pietermaritzburg due to unsafe working conditions.

According to the PSA, the building, which serves as one of the department's administrative hubs, failed to meet health and safety standards when inspected in December 2025.

Employees had reported numerous hazards, including only two functioning elevators out of four, a rat infestation, a lack of cleaning services, unserviced fire extinguishers, exposed electrical wires, and overall deterioration of the infrastructure.

"The PSA intervened and reported the matter to the Department of Employment and Labour. The building was found unsafe by a Labour Inspector and was closed," the union stated, highlighting that unsafe working conditions violate the Occupational Health and Safety Act and employees' constitutional right to an environment that does not harm their health or well-being.

The PSA welcomed the department's temporary measures, which included relocating employees to other buildings and allowing some to work from home. However, the union urged the department to find a permanent solution, either through repairing the NED Building or sourcing a safe alternative facility.

"These issues, among others, have exposed employees to potential risk. The PSA calls on the department to prioritise safety by finding a permanent solution," the union said.

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education spokesperson Muzi Mahlambi confirmed the closure, stating: "Yes, the building was closed by the Department of Labour. We are

attending to the requirements as laid down by the Department of Labour. There is a meeting that is scheduled for this afternoon.”

Meanwhile the PSA also raised concerns over the department’s handling of the incentivised early-retirement programme.

The union said applications opened on 15 October 2025, but many employees claim they have not received any official responses or timelines for processing their submissions.

The union described the lack of communication as a source of anxiety and financial stress for applicants planning major life transitions.

“The PSA calls on the department to provide regular feedback to applications, offer support and guidance, provide realistic timeframes, and establish proper feedback channels accessible to all,” the union said.