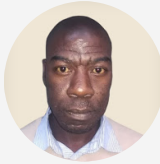


SOUTH AFRICA

PSA calls for audit of public health facilities to identify, address fire risks

Union says safety of patients, staff and infrastructure must be priority

26 November 2024 - 16:00



Ernest Mabuza

Journalist



Tshwane emergency services responded to a fire at Steve Biko Hospital which engulfed the ICU with smoke on Saturday morning.

Image: Supplied

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and all public health-care facilities to identify and address fire hazards and other risks.

The union made the call after a fire broke out at the hospital in the early hours of Saturday, forcing the evacuation of intensive care unit patients because of heavy smoke that was coming from the uninterrupted power supply system (UPS) lithium batteries backup system which had a leak and caught fire. No other parts of the hospital were affected.

The union said given the fire's origin in the lithium-ion battery backup system, the health department must investigate the safety of similar systems at all hospitals and implement stricter maintenance protocols. It also called for regular fire drills and adequate training of hospital staff to ensure readiness for emergencies.

“This incident underscores the vulnerability of South Africa’s public health-care infrastructure. Steve Biko Academic Hospital is one of the country’s leading tertiary health-care facilities, and any compromise in its services directly affects the health of thousands of South Africans,” it said.

The union said ensuring the safety of patients, staff and infrastructure must be an immediate and an ongoing priority for the government.

TimesLIVE

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Tshwane emergency services said they received a call about the fire at about 12.45am and the fire was extinguished four hours later.

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