

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA insists on provision of personal protective equipment**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), which represents more than 240 000 public servants, is concerned about the lack of protective clothing throughout government institutions, especially for critical workers who are performing duties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PSA applauds public servants who render critical duties at the frontline of efforts to quell and mitigate the rapid spread of COVID-19 in South African communities. The PSA is, however, aware that some institutions are non-compliant with health and safety regulations, especially with regard to the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and are thus putting these employees and the public at risk. In the wake of the PSA's engagement with institutional heads, there has been a fair level of compliance and efforts on the part of most institutions.

The State as employer is, however, under legal obligation to provide a healthy and safe working environment to workers on duty, especially during the lockdown. This is an obligation that the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL), as enforcer of health and safety regulations, must fulfil in the event of contraventions. The PSA will engage the DEL to step in at identified workplaces where institutional heads and heads of department fall short.

The PSA is considerate of the unprecedented challenges faced by the State under current circumstances, which amongst others, is the availability of PPE in the country. A meeting has been scheduled with the Minister of Health for 7 April 2020 to address challenges in provision of PPE to ensure a safe and healthy working environment. The PSA expects government to fully disclose its challenges with labour to seek viable options and solutions. The current situation demands that all stakeholders work in close cooperation to manage the health pandemic, which poses not only health risks, but economic uncertainties should the country fail to curb the pandemic within a reasonable time.

The PSA is pro-actively involved in steering Committees in Government departments to ensure *Occupational Health and Safety Act* compliance and assist in resolving any workplace challenges in the Union's efforts to support the battle against the virus and ensuring employees' safety. The PSA appeals to Government to prioritise the creation of healthy and safe working conditions, not only during the COVID-19 pandemic, but to be exemplary with *OHS* compliance being the norm.

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