

MEDIA RELEASE COVID-19: PSA calls for immediate closure of Beitbridge Border

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is shocked about the way in which the South African Revenue Service (SARS) has managed the COVID-19 pandemic at the Beitbridge Border post, following the death of an employee owing to COVID-19.

Despite positive COVID-19 cases at the Border post, SARS has failed to ensure the disinfection of the area in line with safety protocols. One SARS official has succumbed to the virus, which should have triggered urgent action from any responsible employer. Safety regulations call for the disinfection of a workplace where there is positive COVID-19 case but SARS, which seems oblivious to the dangers, chooses to ignore safety regulations, despite the death of an employee. Employees continued to work in the contaminated workplace without receiving counselling or support from the employer.

The lethargic response by SARS to the pandemic endangers employees' lives. This conduct is inexcusable and reckless and is condemned in the strongest terms. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* obliges an employer to provide a workplace that is safe and conducive for employees. The failure by SARS to comply must be accounted for. A manager became aware of these cases but concealed the information, which demonstrates recklessness and is tantamount to premeditated murder, as employees are knowingly exposed to danger.

The PSA calls for the immediate closure of the Beitbridge Border post to allow for disinfection and the testing of all SARS employees based at the post as a matter of urgency. The PSA will furthermore engage the Department of Employment and Labour for intervention in this matter.

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