

MEDIA RELEASE Inappropriate protective equipment endangers staff at Bongani TB Hospital, Mpumalanga: PSA calls for immediate action

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely concerned about the Mpumalanga Department of Health's failure to adequately safeguard the health and safety of employees across the Province.

This concern is particularly evident at Bongani Hospital, where employees have reportedly been issued with expired masks for use as personal protective equipment (PPE). The PSA regards the situation at Bongani Hospital as extremely serious, given that it is a TB hospital, where employees perform duties in an environment where they may be exposed to airborne respiratory hazards. In such an environment, appropriate and effective PPE is essential to minimise occupational exposure and protect employees.

The use of expired masks potentially compromises the protection available to employees and exposes them to an unnecessary occupational health and safety risk. The PSA is concerned that this may be inconsistent with the employer's obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993*, including the duty to provide and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to employees' health.

The PSA calls on the Department and Bongani Hospital management to immediately withdraw the expired masks, provide employees with valid and fit-for-purpose PPE, and urgently investigate how expired PPE came to be issued. Corrective measures must be implemented to ensure a recurrence.

The PSA recognises the vital role Bongani Hospital plays in providing healthcare services to the community. Employees must be adequately protected to enable them to continue delivering essential healthcare services without their own health and safety being unnecessarily compromised.

The PSA expects urgent action by the Department and meaningful engagement with organised labour. Should the matter not be resolved, the PSA will consider the appropriate labour and occupational health and safety mechanisms available to protect the Union's members.

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