

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	Mpumalanga Emergency Medical Services crisis: PSA demands immediate action
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<b>EMBARGO</b>	None
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) condemns the Mpumalanga Department of Health for allowing the province's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to descend into a full-scale crisis.

Currently, only 72 of 194 ambulances are operational in service of more than five million residents, resulting in life-threatening delays. Staff shortages have rendered many vehicles idle, putting patients relying on emergency medical services at severe risk. The PSA calls on the Premier of Mpumalanga and the MEC for Health to intervene immediately and take decisive measures before more preventable deaths occur.

The Health Ombud has repeatedly flagged the systemic failures, yet the Department continues to neglect its duty of care. EMS response times are consistently below national standards. The shortage of trained personnel is critical, placing patients' lives at risk. The lack of transparency and accountability exacerbates the crisis. Rural communities are particularly vulnerable, with some waiting hours for urgent medical attention. Mpumalanga requires 514 ambulances to meet national standards, whilst only 72 are operational, thus creating deficit of 442 ambulances. International benchmarks recommend 95.9 EMS staff members per 100 000 residents. Mpumalanga has 13.5 staff members per 100 000 residents, leaving employees overworked and the public in danger. Call volumes exceed 26 000 per quarter and ambulances remain unused owing to staff shortages. Rural patients face long waits, leading to preventable deaths and eroding trust in the EMS system.

In Ehlanzeni District with a population of 2 270 897, 227 ambulances are required whilst only 32 are active, leaving a gap of 195. In Nkangala District with a population of 1 588 684, 159 ambulances are required whilst only 22 are active, leaving a gap of 137. In Gert Sibande District with a population of 1 283 459, 128 ambulances are required whilst only 18 are active, resulting in a gap of 110.

The PSA demands the immediate recruitment of employees to deal with idle ambulances and restore full operational capacity. Full public disclosure of ambulance and EMS staff numbers per district are required to ensure transparency. Urgent procurement of at least 440 additional ambulances is required to meet service-delivery standards. The implementation of monthly EMS performance dashboards is required to monitor and improve response times. Independent audits and parliamentary oversight are also necessary to ensure accountability and prevent further mismanagement.

The PSA will escalate this matter through legal avenues, and sustained advocacy until the Department of Health demonstrates a genuine commitment to saving lives. The people of Mpumalanga deserve EMS services that are fully operational, reliable, and adequately staffed. Failure to act is a direct threat to public safety.

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