

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA victorious: Raphahlelo Emergency Medical Services (EMS) closed down**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the closing of Raphahlelo Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Sekgosesa in Limpopo after it was declared a health hazard for employees by the Department of Labour.

The PSA has been at loggerheads with the employer since August 2019 regarding failure to provide a healthy and safe working environment for employees of Raphahlelo EMS in Sekgosesa. These employees complained about the status of their workplace that contravenes the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS Act)*, which stipulates that: "Every employer shall provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of his employees".

The PSA approached the Department of Labour on the matter. A Labour Inspector and the PSA visited the workplace, which resulted in the Department of Labour issuing a prohibition notice after concluding that the employer was in breach of the *OHS Act*. Toilets are not functional, exposing employees to blocked drains. The employees were accommodated in a small office in a dilapidated building in an overgrown yard. This work environment was contrary to section 10 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, which states that "everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected".

The notice included the prohibition of sanitary facilities because of lack of water which may lead to infections. The use of broken chairs was prohibited as this poses the risk of future health problems. Employees were also prohibited from entering the storeroom until it was declared safe. The employer was, amongst others, ordered to have a copy of the *Act* at the station, appoint a health and safety representative, and to keep records. The employees have been moved to a safe working environment that was prior to occupation inspected by the Department of Labour and declared to be safe. The notices issued on the previous building will remain in force until problems have been rectified.

The PSA will continue to ensure that the employer complies with the application of the *OHS Act*. The PSA commends the commitment of the Department of Labour to ensuring safe working environments and the protection of employees' dignity.

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