

MEDIA RELEASE

PSA concerned on spread of COVID-19 infections - SAPS

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EMBARGO

None

ENQUIRIES

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), is extremely concerned over the increasing rate of infections among South African Police Services (SAPS) members, which includes both uniform members and support services. The Minister of Police reported that 253 staff members are infected by the virus and on 30 April 2020, almost 12 days ago, 103 police officers tested positive. These figures indicate that the infections have doubled in a short space of time. The PSA is appealing to the Minister and the National Police Commissioner, to not only ensure that the Regulations are adhered to, but to also embark on alternative measures and other initiatives to curb the rapid spread of this pandemic amongst service members.

Some of these includes amongst others, the proactive recruitment and filling of vacancies in the SAPS. Not only does the need for policing during this period justify the appointment of more police officers, but the existing shortage of staff is placing pressure on the remaining workforce and thereby causing unnecessary and further exposure to the virus. The availability of sufficient manpower is not negotiable, and this need is set to increase with the recent announcement made by President Cyril Ramaphosa, that almost 19 000 inmates who committed “petty” crimes would be released on parole. Without any proof of rehabilitation, they may return to crime with more serious offences resulting from their interaction with hardened criminals. Thereby creating more pressure on existing members.

The PSA represents thousands of employees and is of the view that SAPS is failing, in its duty to ensure a safe working environment for its employees and not taking pro-active steps to reduce the risk to police officers. SAPS must endeavour to screen and test members on an ongoing basis when reporting in the morning and when knocking-off after their shift, provision of surgical masks, mandatory screening by the Department of Health to include off-duty members. Some members have already raised concerns, regarding the limited availability of tools for testing and screening. **The PSA calls for SAPS to enter into collaboration with one of the divisions of the Department of Defence’s South African Medical Health Service (SAMHS), such as Military Hospitals where feasible, in order to have access to their facilities.**

The PSA demands that SAPS urgently table a long-term solution driven strategy to address the anticipated outbreak of the virus at various stations across the country.

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