

MEDIA RELEASE World Day for Safety and Health at Work: PSA calls for action

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On World Day for Safety and Health at Work, the Public Servants Association (PSA) calls for sustained action to prioritise physical safety in the workplace as well as the psychosocial wellbeing of public servants across South Africa.

The modern workplace is evolving rapidly, and with it, pressures faced by employees. The psychosocial working environment, shaped by how work is organised and managed, plays a critical role in determining employees' health, safety, and productivity. Factors such as excessive workloads, long or irregular working hours, inadequate support, and unfair processes significantly affect how employees experience their work. When these psychosocial factors are poorly managed, they become occupational hazards. Similar to physical, chemical, or biological risks, such factors must be identified, assessed, and actively managed. Failure to do so undermines employee wellbeing and weakens service delivery, increases absenteeism, and contributes to burnout and high staff turnover.

Workplace stress should not be normalised as "part of the job". Public servants operate in demanding environments, often under resource constraints and increasing public expectations. Without proper safeguards, these pressures can impact on morale, compromise mental health, and affect the quality of services delivered to citizens.

A healthy working environment requires a proactive, prevention-focused approach. This includes ensuring reasonable workloads, promoting work-life balance, fostering supportive leadership, and maintaining transparent and fair organisational practices. Safe spaces where employees feel heard, respected, and empowered to raise concerns without fear of victimisation should be created. The PSA calls on employers to strengthen policies and practices that address psychosocial risks. Leadership must take accountability for cultivating workplaces that value dignity, respect, and wellbeing as fundamental principles.

The PSA reaffirms the Union's commitment to advocating for safer, healthier working conditions for public servants. This includes ongoing engagement with stakeholders, raising awareness about psychosocial risks, and supporting members. The shortage of staff at critical institutions must be addressed as a matter of priority. A resilient and effective public service depends on employees who are physically safe whilst also being mentally and emotionally supported.

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