

FOR PSA MEMBERS: DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION (DWS)

27-05-2020

Special Chamber: Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Compliance and COVID-19 Regulations

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) on 16 March 2020 issued guidelines for the containment/management of the Coronavirus in the Public Service which, amongst others, required employers to establish a Steering Committee (SC) inclusive of organised labour to deal with all issues concerning COVID-19 and report directly to the Head of Department. The Department only managed to establish the SC, inclusive of Labour, on 29 April 2020 at the point when the country was starting to move to level 4 of the lockdown.

The SC, amongst others, extensively discussed the issue of compliance and recall of employees and it was determined that most of the offices were not yet compliant. A communication was issued indicating that the status quo will remain and only those employees identified as essential and/or critical under level 5 and provided with permits would continue to report for duty. A phased-in recall process would be determined for other employees and communicated in due course.

The SC has been meeting on a weekly basis for the duration of May and focused on the development of a comprehensive COVID-19 workplace readiness, risk adjusted approach, checklist to be completed by Head Office, regional, cluster and construction offices. The first progress reports confirmed that most of the offices were not yet ready to allow additional employees back to the offices.

The General Public Service Sectoral Bargaining Council (GPSSBC) has also since resolved that the Council will ensure implementation and compliance with Regulations issued in terms of section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, with respect to ensuring a safe and conducive workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council further resolved that the departmental OHS Committees should oversee the compliance process and that the Chambers of Council will monitor and report to Council on the implementation of the regulations.

At the special Chamber meeting it was confirmed that the OHS Committee is represented on the SC and that there is still work to be done before additional employees can be recalled. The matter will be a standing item on the agenda of the Chamber and will be interrogated further in the next Chamber meeting proposed for 10 June 2020, subject to confirmation by stakeholders.

Members will be kept informed of developments.

GENERAL MANAGER