

FOR PSA MEMBERS: LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

02-06-2020

COVID-19 Regulations: Provincial Office

Members would recall that the department approved a “Return to Work” Directive, read with DPSA Circular 7 and 18/2020. The plan provides the safety measures to be implemented before employees can return to work as the department planned to open its offices on 1 June 2020. Amongst measures proposed was the deep cleaning of all offices, disinfecting of vehicles, and floor markings in the waiting areas.

The PSA’s shop stewards were however alerted, by concerned members regarding the non-implementation of safety measures in that no deep cleaning, decontamination, and sanitising of the offices on the first and second floors, of the Beneficiary Services was conducted. Furthermore, the staggered approach to return to work, was ignored leading to no observation of social distancing per the Department of Health’s Guidelines of 1.5m, especially in the confined offices. A meeting was convened and resolved that members shall not expose their lives to danger, so it was resolved that those officials provided with working tools continue working remotely and that no employee should enter the workplace until safe.

This is the consequence of marginalisation of labour in the COVID-19 Steering/OHS Committee, wherein the employer constantly fails to invite them to meetings. It must be noted that the committee has an obligation to ensure compliance and assess risks prior to employees returning to work. The PSA has previously warned the employer about the failure to convene meetings wherein labour representatives can be consulted properly.

The PSA applauds its shop stewards for protecting the rights of members and not allowing the employer to bully them into succumbing to the pressure to work in an unsafe working environment. The PSA always maintain that the safety of employees is non-negotiable. The PSA Provincial Office will further engage the employer to ensure the functionality of the OHS Committee and compliance with the Safety Directives, as the employer has legal obligation to provide workplaces that are safe and without risk to employees as per Section 8 of *OHS Act*.

GENERAL MANAGER