

FOR PSA MEMBERS: *GENERAL 13/2020*

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Workers' Day 2020: New perspective on public servants

Workers' Day on 1 May 2020 will go down in history not for the traditional celebrations that annually mark this day, but rather for the sacrifices by workers at the frontline of the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic that has left a trail of devastation across the world.

The pandemic has impacted on workers in various ways. At the frontline are workers who render critical essential services - Nurses, Doctors, Police Officers, Emergency Medical Services Officials, and other healthcare workers. These professionals are proving their value to society in an unprecedented manner. Also amongst those who kept critical services running during the lockdown are employees of the South African Social Security Agency, the Department of Correctional Services and the Department of Home Affairs, to name but a few.

The PSA has been a driving force in ensuring employers' compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* even before COVID-19 arrived in South Africa. This resulted in the closure of various unsafe government buildings. This mission intensified to protect employees' health and safety in the face of COVID-19. The PSA has since confirmation of the first positive case in the country been a champion in ensuring that workers are adequately protected and that their rights are respected in line with legislation, regulations and guidelines. The PSA continues to monitor and enforce compliance related to personal protective equipment, transport, work permits, danger allowances, etc.

The PSA furthermore realises that the relatives of its members may be affected by a loss of income. In this regard, PSA services are available via the Union's Provincial Offices to assist with the completion of application forms for financial relief as announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The PSA is also ready to protect workers as lockdown restrictions are lifted and new challenges emerge. The Union is actively engaged in structures tasked with various aspects of this complicated process. And, in the midst of this, the PSA continues on its mission to compel the state as employer to honour overdue salary increase obligations towards employees – the same public servants who have been, and will continue to be driving forces in curbing the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 has changed life as we knew it. On Workers' Day, the PSA again pays tribute to public servants and all other workers who have shown courage and determination during unprecedented trying times, whilst also remembering those who have already paid the highest price in the execution of their duties.

GENERAL MANAGER