

FOR PSA MEMBERS: **DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES, AND ENVIRONMENT (DFFE)**

02-02-2022

## Feedback: Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Higher Committee Meeting

The virtual meeting was held on 1 February 2022 and the following issues were discussed:

### Cleaning and Hygiene Services

Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Western Cape are experiencing a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). The employer reported that centralisation of procurement of PPE to Head Office is being considered to safeguard timeous provision of these products. A three-month renewable contract has been secured to ensure a healthy and safe environment for employees in these provinces. Products are being shared with such workstations, especially Forestry and Fisheries Branches. It was reported that the terms of reference for the centralisation of acquisition of PPE for all offices, including provinces, will be finalized shortly.

### Strengthening of Awareness Campaigns

The employer observed laxity regarding compliance with COVID-19 protocols and the HoD instructed the Employee Wellness section to reinforce strict compliance. The section and OHS Branch will develop a program to address non-compliance, which will be tabled to the Committee before submission to the DG for approval.

### Sharing of information

The employer confirmed that the contact details of all representatives regarding injuries and diseases emanating from the *Compensation of Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) of 1993, (Act 130 of 1993)* were shared with provinces. Furthermore, a circular containing guidelines regarding the COVID-19 procedure on isolation and quarantining was also issued. The circular will be updated upon receipt of the latest developments from the Department of Public Service and Administration.

### Proposals: Various Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines

The below-mentioned Draft Guides were shared by the employer. These guides were welcomed as they will assist the newly incorporated Forestry and Fisheries Branches, especially Field Workers, as well as the storage of chemicals by the Branch: Waste and Chemicals.

- Injury on Duty
- First Aid
- Cleaning
- COVID 19 Risk Assessment
- Fire Emergency Procedure: Fire Fighting Equipment
- Fire Emergency Procedure: Storage and Electric Fire Safety
- Fire Emergency Procedure: Isolation
- Fire Emergency Procedure: Entrances and Events
- Fire Emergency Procedure: Emergency Evacuations and Drills
- Fire Emergency Procedure: Fire Safety Training
- Safety Culture Assessments

### **Occupational Health and Safety Reports: Non-compliance**

No new reports were submitted from any province except Western Cape, which experienced a shortage of water, especially Espier Building and the Oceans and Coasts Branch. The challenge has been addressed with the landlord. A detailed report will be shared during forthcoming bi-weekly meetings.

### **Report: COVID-19 statistics**

In total, 542 positive cases were reported, and 11 affected employees succumbed to the pandemic. 14 cases are active cases and the employer succeeded to contact trace 1 472 cases as of 31 January 2022. The provincial breakdown is as follows: Gauteng 240, Eastern Cape 79, KwaZulu-Natal 31, Limpopo 12, Western Cape 156, Mpumalanga 10, Northern Cape 7, and Free State 5.

### **Status: Compensation of Injuries and Diseases Act of 1993 cases**

Members will recall that there was a challenge with feedback from the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) regarding reporting cases, The PSA intervened through engagement with the Department. In total, 50 new cases were reported, excluding previously reported cases and the spreadsheet was submitted to the DEL for investigation. Some forms could, however, not be submitted owing to incompleteness. Affected employees were alerted to address identified omissions.

### **Resuscitation: Regional OHS structures**

The Department has already embarked on the revival of these structures as demanded by the PSA. The Department took an informed decision to physically visit provinces for verification and nomination. A progress report will be tabled during the meeting on 22 February 2022. The following items were deferred to the next meeting:

- Electronic Screening Tools
- Vaccination Plan

The PSA wishes all members who are/were impacted by COVID-19 a speedy recovery. The PSA further encourages members to be vaccinated to protect themselves and others.

GENERAL MANAGER