

Feedback: Special Departmental Bargaining Chamber - 26 September 2022

Wastewater-treatment plants

Members will recall that the task team undertook roadshows during May 2022 for the Polokwane and Nelspruit regions respectively, following complaints regarding the dire working conditions of employees at Wastewater Care Treatment Plants. The task team presented a report to the Chamber after the visit, and the employer made an undertaking that delegates from management will be deployed to both the Limpopo and Mpumalanga regions. The purpose of the visit is to look at the extent of challenges facing water-care treatment plants, especially as witnessed by the task team and to inform a program of action to deal with short and long-term solutions.

The general assessment on the visit by management to the Polokwane and Nelspruit regions brings many concerns regarding these water-care facilities. It reported that there is poor management at these facilities, and this is no fault to the regions but rather the structure focused on this service. There is a lack of planned maintenance of critical equipment and equipment is only repaired once there are identified faults. There is general absence of detection equipment at critical stages in the process up to and including the case of wastewater facilities. Chemicals dosing is not visible in most sites, let alone the chemical storage facilities. There is infestation of dangerous animals (snakes and crocodiles) at most sites. There is also general absence of inlet-flow measuring equipment into plants and records for chemical testing at most sites. It further reported that there is absence of name boards indicating the name of the plant, the treatment process being employed on sites, employees in the event incidents, etc. There is a visible deterioration of security fences and an absence of firebreaks, an absence of proper access control, and a lack of security officers. Employees are utilising available rooms for permanent accommodation. The absence of budget for water-care facilities in the regions was the main point of concern raised by the responsible team leaders.

The employer indicated that to bring the sites to an acceptable state, an assessment and repair report needs to be done by Project Management Officers jointly with Facility Management and Construction Project Management in the respective sites to get to a structured program of action without delay. The servicing of all water-care facilities is to be prioritised in the 2023/24 plan by all regions and the budget request after the conclusion of the assessment program.

Labour noted the honest presentation from employer, which paints a clear picture of the conditions that water-care treatment plants employees are subjected to daily. The PSA indicated that the employer's presentation focused mainly on long term actions, which lacks immediate measures to remedy the situation. It therefore proposed that parties should request an urgent meeting with the Acting Director-General (DG) . Parties agreed to draft a letter to the office of the DG as a matter of urgency. Members will be informed of developments.

Employees who want to join the PSA can visit the PSA's website (www.psa.co.za), send an email to ask@psa.co.za, or contact PSA Provincial Offices.

GENERAL MANAGER