

Poor working conditions at SASSA Makhado Local Office

The PSA was alerted of the poor working conditions experienced by members at Makhado SASSA local office. The PSA promptly responded to the call and requested a meeting with management, which took place on 19 July 2023. The crux of the matter was the employer's failure to provide a conducive, safe, and risk-free workplace to employees was a direct violation of both the *OHSA* and SASSA's own Occupational Health and Safety Policy. The PSA raised the following issues with the employer, which needed urgent attention:

- Lack of freely accessible emergency exit door, which poses a risk in case of emergency.
- Lift constantly out of order, forcing employees and clients to use stairs, which is often impossible for most SASSA clients noting their profile, *i.e.*, elderly, and disabled. Subsequently, employees are assisting clients in the open parking space, which is undignified and unprofessional.
- Lack of drinking water.
- Inadequate and dysfunctional toilets, hence, employees and clients must carry buckets when visiting toilets.
- Poor ventilation owing to broken and unmaintained air conditioners.
- Dirty carpets, which is a problem to those with respiratory conditions.
- Exposure to direct sunlight, which affects visibility of the computers for employees as there are no blinds.
- No eating place/canteen, forcing employees to eat at their workstations, which is not proper.

Despite the SASSA OHS policy, providing that employees must be released if the building or part of the building do not have basic services for the minimum period of two hours or more owing to technical faults or circumstances beyond SASSA's control, the local manager failed to ensure compliance with the Policy. Upon engagement, management confirmed that it is aware of these issues and takes responsibility. It confirmed that the building is leased and does not meet SASSA's service needs, however, it was the only building available although management could not explain why it kept on renewing the contract despite the building not meeting service needs. The challenges were also attributed to the Department of Public Works that procured the same building although the contract expires in July 2024, which provides the opportunity to look for a proper building. Most of the problems were, however, attributed to poor management as they are within SASSA's control.

The employer was subsequently given a month to address these issues and parties will meet after a month to get a report.

Members and shop stewards are urged to constantly assess the working environment and to immediately report any non-compliance to the PSA Provincial Office on (015) 295 0500 or send an email to queen.seema@psa.co.za. The safety of employees remains critically important to the PSA.

Members will be informed of developments.

Employees who wish to join the PSA can contact Lawrence Muvhango (Lawrence.muvhango@psa.co.za / 082 880 8995), or Paulina Moloto (Paulina.moloto@psa.co.za / 082 880 8957) or the PSA Provincial Office on (015) 295 0500.

GENERAL MANAGER