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FOR PSA MEMBERS: **FREE STATE**

09-01-2024

Update: Your rights in the face of the Free State water crises

The ongoing water crises in Theunissen and Winburg have once again called attention to the responsibilities of employers and the rights of employees in ensuring a safe and healthy working environment.

While these water shortages are typically viewed as a municipality crisis, it is important to note that Section 8 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* places the responsibility on employers to maintain a safe and healthy environment for their employees. However, it is also crucial for members to play their part in ensuring a healthy and safe work environment.

To ensure that your rights are not infringed upon, members are urged to follow the protocol below in the event of a water shortage:

- Report the matter to your supervisor and Area Manager and request a contingency plan. If a plan is in place, follow it accordingly. If there is no plan in place, proceed to the next step.
- Report the matter to your Health and Safety Representative. If the representative cannot provide directions, proceed to the next step.
- Report the matter to the PSA Provincial Office for further handling and report it to the Department of Employment and Labour.

In addition, all employees are encouraged to ensure that Occupational Health and Safety Committees are in existence and functioning. Please request your supervisor or Manager to provide you with the contact details of the representatives. Furthermore, it is vital that each department has a contingency plan in place for water shortages. This plan should include:

- Providing alternatives for water, such as sanitiser.
- Alternatives to ensure work continuity, for example, work-from-home options, shortened workdays, or a shift system.
- A plan for handling or assisting the public, such as prioritising emergency clients or having set opening hours for the office.

Should all the above steps fail, please bring the matter to the attention of the PSA Provincial Office at (051) 403 1300.

Members are encouraged to be proactive in enforcing their rights and ensuring a healthy work environment.

Reuben Maleka
GENERAL MANAGER