

R124m damage to schools

Francesca Villette

DAMAGE to schools by storm and fire has cost the province R124 million, and counting.

According to the latest report compiled by the Western Cape Education Department, 170 schools were wrecked by the storm that hit two weeks ago, and another two were damaged by fires that engulfed the Southern Cape.

Education MEC Debbie Schäfer said that while the extent of damages at schools varied, 102 had damage to roofs, 27 had damage to fences, and 14 had structural damage.

"I am informed that as cases were reported to the Safe Schools Directorate, the information was immediately passed on to the DTPW (Department of Transport and Public Works) who sent out inspectors to visit sites and assess damages. Our priority was to make schools operational as soon as possible, where possible.

"Officials who visited schools immediately took

action in ensuring that where possible, school sites were made safe for use so learning and teaching can continue with limited interference," Schäfer said.

It is estimated that the cost of repairs and/or replacement currently stands at around R124m, Schäfer said, but some schools are still being assessed.

The storm also claimed eight lives, including that of 4-year-old twins, and as winds of up to 90km/h howled through the peninsula, an unfinished building collapsed on to a Wendy house in Lavender Hill, killing 69-year-old Joseph Connie instantly.

DTPW Minister Nathi Nhleko last week established

a technical assessment team to evaluate damage to public infrastructure caused by the storm and fires.

Department spokesperson Lesiba Kgwele yesterday said the team is still busy, but is expected to finish soon.

A total of 55 schools that were visited for inspection were repaired on-site, and

the DTPW has procured contractors at 27 schools. "At four schools where the mobile units were damaged, we are repairing or replacing these units," said Schäfer.

Principals can report storm damage to schools to the Safe Schools Call Centre by calling 0800 45 46 47.

francesca.villette@inl.co.za



HARD LESSONS: Marthinus David surveys the damage to a section of Sunnyside Primary School in Athlone that was caused by a storm.

Picture: TRACEY ADAMS