



Elona Mngcangceni, 15, Yonela Radase, 16, and Nombulelo Bless, 15, all grade 10 pupils at Uxolo High School in Khayelitsha, collect water during a break from class.
PICTURE: PHANDO JIKELO/AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY (ANA)

Day Zero threat to Western Cape schools

Mary Jane Mphahlele

The Western Cape Department of Public Works says Day Zero may see more schools closing if they do not have stored water for when taps run dry.

Provincial deputy director-general for Public Works Gavin Kode briefed the provincial legislature's rules committee on what needed to be done to avoid the Western Cape's taps running dry.

"Most schools will have to close if they don't have their own safe supply from boreholes or rainwater tanks.

"Many businesses will not be able to operate unless they can provide temporary toilets and drinking water,"

said Kode. It is predicted that the city will hit "Day Zero" on April 12, when all taps will be turned off.

During this period, the city will move into full-scale Emergency stage 3.

This means that water to households and businesses will be cut off.

There will not be enough water to maintain normal services and the taps, including those to toilets, will run dry.

Western Cape Premier Helen Zille moved to assure principals and education officials at a mass meeting in Kuils River on Wednesday that schools will not close if Cape Town reaches Day Zero.

Zille said every school had to have a water emergency plan and assured stakeholders that officials would be available to assist in drawing up their strategies.

Kode said the water supply would be limited to essential services, including hospitals and clinics.

He stressed that departments needed to assess their staff requirements to render essential services.

Kode said most of the new sources, which include groundwater, desalination and reclaimed water from wastewater treatment plans, were far from complete.

"About 150 million litres per

day of groundwater, 120 million litres of desalinated water and 22 million litres of reclaimed water are planned to come on-line by the end of the year," said Kode.

ANC MPL Maurencia Gillion lambasted the DA provincial government during the briefing for having no plans in place to avert Day Zero, other than asking Capetonians to save water.

"From my point of view looking at the presentation and taking part in this meeting now, I think the province, as well as the City of Cape Town, don't have a plan, they don't have a concrete plan for Day Zero," said Gillion.