

Joburg's buildings of death

Public servants refuse to enter unsafe offices after fatal fire

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MORE Joburg CBD buildings have been flagged as falling short of safety standards following the deadly fire in the Lisbon Bank building, housing at least three government departments.

As news of three firemen dying in the inferno at the building spread, government employees working in these buildings of shame began to refuse to enter the unsafe offices yesterday.

Other companies, such as Independent Media, which houses The Star, chose to evacuate their workers as the inferno at the neighbouring building worsened.

Gauteng Department of Education workers protested and refused to work in their dilapidated building on Fox Street, which they described as “an accident waiting to happen”.

The building, which houses school inspectors and curriculum experts, is without working toilets and drinkable water. It also has collapsing floorboards.

The SA Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) yesterday took its members out of the building, which is two streets away from the Bank of Lisbon building and a stone's throw from the ANC's

Luthuli House headquarters.

Employees said the building was unkempt, with ablution facilities constantly breaking down, unserviced air conditioners and old furniture.

Besides the tragic death of the three courageous firefighters, eight others were admitted to hospital for smoke inhalation and burn injuries.

At least 13 Health, Human Settlements and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs employees were injured.

Sadtu members marched to the provincial Infrastructure Development Department, demanding immediate action to avert further loss of lives.

Gauteng DA spokesperson on infrastructure development and planning, Alan Fuchs, said on Wednesday that there were at least nine other buildings in the Joburg CBD owned or managed by the provincial legislature and the Public Works Department that were safety hazards.

He named some of the derelict buildings as the New Heritage Library Hotel, the SA Reserve Bank building, Clegg House, Montrose House and SA Permanent Bank building, among others.

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