

CONCRETE TV

THERE ARE DELIBERATE ATTEMPTS TO SABOTAGE GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS – NXESI

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There are deliberate acts to sabotage government buildings through arson, Public Works Minister, Thulas Nxesi, said on Friday. He said there were two arson attempts this week at the Civitas building -- the national headquarters of the health department. The most recent incident was when the 14th floor was set on fire whilst there were still people in the building.

"The alarms went off and staff were able to extinguish the blaze -- otherwise the results might have been lethal," he said. "We are dealing with a concerted campaign of criminal and potentially sabotage... Where contractors have made repairs on air-conditioning units, they return to find wiring cut and the disabling of smoke detector."

Nxesi said they have reported an arson attempt case at South African Police Services. He said they suspected that this incident might be linked to the fire which claimed three lives of firefighters at the provincial government offices in Johannesburg this week. The building only had 21% level of compliance against the norm of 85%.

Reports that the Civitas building is overcrowded with no air-conditioning or windows and a leaking roof are an exaggeration Nxesi said. "We reject the sensationalist headlines suggesting that the department of health "Civitas" is a death trap because the building has never been declared uninhabitable by all appropriate and authorities institutions that undertook an assessment of the building."

However, Nxesi, conceded that the building had been poorly maintained and this resulted in the malfunctioning of the air-conditioning. The Public Servants Association of SA will head to the Labour Court this week in an attempt to close down the building. "We appreciate to be taken to court so that it can be decided whether we are putting people's lives in danger," said Motsoaledi.

An official from public works said a report on the compliance standard at Civitas was not available but they are still working on it.