

But Masutha wants his staff back at the headquarters soon

Correctional services minister Michael Masutha wants his staff back at headquarters as soon as possible but will not go to the courts to challenge the shutdown of the building by Tshwane mayor Solly Msimanga on safety grounds.

In the wake of a deadly fire at the Bank of Lisbon building in Johannesburg's city centre recently, concerns have been raised about safety in older buildings occupied by government departments. Three firefighters died while trying to extinguish the blaze.

"We cannot continue to put the lives of over 1 000 employees at risk, who are expected to report to work every day in a building that is not complying to safety regulations and is nonconductive," Msimanga said after an inspection visit on Wednesday to the Poyatons building in the Pretoria CBD, after which he announced its evacuation.

On Friday, he announced that the city manager's office would institute a comprehensive investigation and report on the occupational health and safety standards and fire compliance for City of Tshwane buildings.

"At the centre of these audits is our goal to preserve innocent lives," he said.

Masutha said following Msimanga's intervention at the correctional services



Minister of correctional services Michael Masutha says the owners of the building have been contacted to engage on safety measures to be undertaken. /LISA HNATOWICZ / GALLO IMAGES

Audit of buildings welcomed

latory safety requirements".

"In view of this development, the minister does not believe it is necessary at this stage to approach the courts to challenge the shutdown," said Masutha's office.

"Given the public interest that attaches to this matter, the minister believes that the engagement between the municipality and the owners of the building must result in

in order for the department to resume its constitutional mandate. To this end, the department is also in the process of consultations with various stakeholders including staff and organised labour."

The minister said that he "appreciates the new spirit of co-operation - including the municipality's permission [for] engineers to access the building - between the

actions, stating: "At the centre of these [occupational health and safety] audits is our goal to preserve innocent lives."

"Government buildings house hundreds of people, thus making it all the more urgent to ensure that buildings found to be noncompliant stop operating before disaster strikes." - TimesLIVE