

Union welcomes decision to vacate Civitas 'death trap'

Employees complained over issues such as ineffective ventilation and sprinklers, dust coming out of the air conditioners, ceilings collapsing and dirty carpets.

Reitumetse Mahope

The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) trade union has welcomed a decision by the health department to procure a new building for employees currently working at the Civitas "death trap".

This follows numerous protests over "unsafe" conditions at the building in the Pretoria CBD.

The decision to vacate Civitas was made after a meeting between the union and health department director general Malebona Precious Matsoso last week Wednesday, according to the PSA's chairperson at the department, Peter Moloi.

The meeting was also attended by Nehawu, the department of labour and relevant officials from the health department.

"We did not even engage on any issues," said Moloi.

"When the director general came in, she simply gave us marching orders."

Moloi said Matsoso had accepted that the Civitas building was not safe and told the meeting the process to start evacuating employees to a new building would start immediately.

On Monday, a meeting was held with a specialised team to establish where to start with a relocation and what to do.

Moloi said the department of public works was also present at Monday's meeting, as they had to confirm how long procuring a building would take and what the process would be.

Further meetings had been set up with Matsoso, according to Moloi.

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Nehawu shop steward Bhungani Mzolo and PSA chairperson at the health department, Peter Moloi.

These will determine when and where to employees still working at the Civitas building will be moved.

Moloi said they were expecting to meet with Matsoso by the latest this Friday.

It is unclear whether Civitas employees will be moved to new or permanent offices.

Moloi said they were also awaiting health

minister Aaron Motsoaledi to approve the relocation.

Health department employees last month protested the "recklessness" of reopening the Civitas building in Pretoria.

They said they were unhappy that management insisted the Civitas building was compliant with health and safety codes.

The protest came after both employees

and unions received a report about conditions at the building.

Employees, however, claimed the report was withheld from them by the employer.

Before the report, there had been regular protests about conditions at the building.

Employees complained over issues such as ineffective ventilation and sprinklers, dust coming out of the air conditioners, ceilings collapsing and dirty carpets.

