

# Deeds Office staff threaten to strike over unimproved conditions

## NOMPILO KUNENE

EMPLOYEES based at the Pietermaritzburg Deeds Office are threatening to down tools again over a lack of air conditioning in the building and other concerns.

Exactly a year ago, workers at the deeds office went on a two-week strike over poor working conditions, which left property sales in limbo as registrations could not be processed.

An employee, who asked not to be named in fear of victimisation, told *The Witness* that they had been raising issues relating to occupational health and safety in the five-storey building occupied by the Deeds and Surveyor-General's offices in Pietermaritzburg since 2013, but no decisive action has been taken to solve the problems.

"It becomes very unbearable to work in such conditions. The ceilings are leaking, the elevators work on and off and the air conditioners are not working.

"We have to switch off the lights in the passages to reduce heat," said the employee.

The man said staff members are now allowed to leave work at 2.30 pm every day because of the unbearable working space but said they were still expected to cover the same workload they would cover when they left work at 4.30 pm.

"We are thinking of striking again with hopes that this time something will be done."



The broken roof at one of the offices at the Pietermaritzburg Deeds Office leaking onto someone's working space, with bags catching the drips.



Flooding at the the Deeds Office in the city.

He said last year they were promised that the building would be fixed up in three months but to date nothing has been done.

"They hired a new registrar and we were all hopeful that we'd see some progress. Nothing has ever happened. We fear that we are risking our lives by walking into this building every day as it is a disaster just waiting to happen," said the man.

Numerous attempts to get comment from both the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the Department of Public Works, which are responsible for the building, were unsuccessful.

• [nompilo.kunene@witness.co.za](mailto:nompilo.kunene@witness.co.za)