

■ COMPLAINT

No cooked meals for prisoners

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BOILERS at Westville Prison have been broken for about four weeks leaving prison officials scrambling for alternative means to provide cooked meals for inmates.

An inmate tipped the Daily News off to what he termed the “violation of the prisoner’s constitutional right” to basic needs.

“Since the boilers broke down about a month ago, we have been surviving on two slices of bread in the morning and five slices in the afternoon. Some of us are on medication for different

Broken boilers fuel violation of inmates’ constitutional rights

illnesses. We just want what is fair to survive,” said the inmate, who would not be named.

Sources at the facility said the boiler issue was not new, and that it should not have been allowed to reach this stage.

“For far too long we have complained about the lack of a back-up. When the first boiler broke down some time ago, it was not fixed so the facility operated with two boilers. A second one broke about three weeks ago, and

the third one gave up probably due to work overload. You need to keep one healthy machine as a back-up. Who knows how long it’s going to take to fix these machines. The authorities are letting these prisoners down,” said a source.

The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) said it was the responsibility of the Department of Public Works to ensure that the boilers were in running condition.

Mbongeni Dladla, union provincial

chairperson, confirmed that the boilers were broken.

However, prisoners’ rights activist Golden Miles Bhudu said the breakdowns could be a “concerted effort” by individuals to force the department to bring in a private service provider.

Correctional Services Department spokesperson Thulani Mdluli said the boiler issue had been identified as a challenge even at the time when Bosasa was still operating at the facility.

“The total breakdown occurred two

weeks ago, but we have an alternative system of electricity equipment to use as a back-up for cooking.

“Repairs and maintenance of the boiler equipment remain a responsibility of the Department of Public Works. Public Works has appointed a contractor to fix the boiler machines,” he said adding that it could take a month to fix the boilers.

Thamsanqa Mchunu, spokesperson for the national public works department, did not respond to emailed questions sent on Monday seeking to understand the time frame for the repairs and the financial implications for the job.