

# Landfill on lock down

## Donations sustain firefighters as KZN cabinet hears latest action plan

**NIYANTA SINGH**

THE smouldering New England Road landfill site is on lock-down. No unauthorised people or vehicles were allowed to enter while waste-pickers yesterday morning took cover at the far end of the site, away from security guards.

This follows Tuesday's visit by Environmental Affairs MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube, who took a hardline stance against the Msunduzi Municipality and their "poor management" of the site and reaction to the crisis.

Dube-Ncube also presented her report to the cabinet at the KZN Legislature yesterday, outlining the crisis at the site, the mismanagement by Msunduzi; and the action plan incorporating assistance from the various government departments and municipalities.

Premier's spokesperson Cecil Msomi said Premier Sihle Zikalala has expressed his concern over the matter and wanted it dealt with as "urgently as possible".

It was recommended that the departments of Community Safety and Liaison, Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs; and Human Settlements all work together to deal with the landfill site issues of illegal waste-pickers, access to the site and foreign nationals illegally on the site.

He said the cabinet was "extremely concerned" over the closure of schools in the area and the environmental impact of the fire.

Msunduzi municipality spokesperson Thobeka Mafumbatha said four teams of fire-fighters from Msunduzi, uMgungundlovu and eThekweni municipalities as well as Working on Fire have been working on the site.

She said there were four water tankers, four graders, four bulldozers, one TLB and one excavator working per 12-hour shift.

Mafumbatha said more ground was covered on Tuesday night but that they were expecting further progress after more equipment is made available to them.

Staff from the Department of Environmental Affairs' Expanded Public Works programme, Working on Fire, have been assisting for three days at the site.

KZN acting general manager Bongani Nhlabathi said they had dispatched 34 firefighters from Monday and would continue providing assistance to the



Members of the Bible Study Group of the Dutch Reformed Church Hayfields with the sandwich platters they dropped off for the firemen on Wednesday.  
**PHOTO: NIYANTA SINGH**

## WASTE PICKERS REGULARLY INJURED AT LANDFILL SITE

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HEAPS of uncompacted rubbish blocking the pathways, sporadic fires, broken machinery and unregulated waste-pickers are a common sight at the New England Road dump.

In March operations came to a standstill during the waste department strike that left the entire City

municipality for as long as it was needed.

"Our team started working the night shift on Tuesday night, which proved to be quite productive. This was done in the hope of combating the fire quickly to reduce the hazardous effects of the smoke to the neighbouring residents," said Nhlabathi.

looking like a dump as refuse was not picked up and bins were not emptied.

Trucks from all over Midlands came and offloaded at New England Road, blocking traffic for days.

The issue of security has been raised on several occasions as waste pickers are regularly injured and sometimes even killed in fights over recyclables, or run over by machinery.

An additional 19 crew members from Working on Fire with a fire truck that loads 3 000 litres of water were dispatched yesterday.

More than 50 firefighters worked the night shift last night, with the promise of rain expected to assist their efforts. Pietermaritzburg residents and busi-

ness owners rallied support around the firefighters, dispatching much needed food, water and other essential supplies to the command site at the dump.

Facebook community group Voices of Pietermaritzburg Angels said they had a phenomenal response to their requests for donations.

Some of the donors include Alpha Pharm Scottsville, Irene King, Save Supermarket, B Hunner Ballet School, Doug Morton, Rabia Karim, Rene Saayman, Sonja Gordon, Sudika Ragoonandan, Sudika Harkhu, Sarah Muller, Dr LC Pillay, Royal Pharmacy and Trucklek Auto Electrical.

They have been contributing water, bananas, cakes, sandwiches, and other food items. Carryn McCann, branch manager at North Safety Products in Pinetown, yesterday took a drive to the dumpsite to drop off donations of respiratory gear for those fighting the fire.

"We're just contributing our share of goodwill as part of the community after this atrocious situation," said McCann. There is still an on-going need for juice and food, energy bars and energy drinks, fruit and water.

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