



Roof and chillers being renovated at Civitas.

# No suitable building for Civitas personnel

## Reitumetse Mahope

The health department has not found any suitable accommodation to house their staff from the “unsafe” Civitas building.

The Department of Public Works was expected to find the new accommodation for the staff.

“It appears that all other buildings that were spoken about were misrepresentations,” said health department spokesperson Popo Maja.

Maja, however, said Civitas was currently being renovated.

“All necessary renovations at Civitas are going ahead unabated. Contractors are on site.”

He said the main and “very important” renovation was the replacement of two chillers and the roof.

Maja said the chillers would ensure that air cons in the building were working properly again.

“Apparently, it takes three weeks, to complete installation of a chiller once delivered on site,” he said.

This follows a dispute between the health department and its employees over the status of the Civitas building, which led the government finally deciding to permanently ditch the building.

Maja said: “The intention is not to come back. It all depends on the public works department to find us accommodation.”

Earlier this year, staff raised safety and health concerns about the continued use of the building which the government had earlier declared safe for use.

An agreement to leave the building in Pretoria CBD was reached between the health ministry and its employees in February.

Civitas, described as “a high-tech building” has been at the centre of a continuous stand-off between labour unions and the departments of labour, health and public works.

Maja said: “It would be in the interest of

everybody for the department of health to relocate elsewhere and leave the Civitas building.”

He said the department had tried everything to prove that the building was safe.

“Numerous meetings had taken place between organised employees, department of labour, health and public works. It was agreed that all the parties will abandon all the technical or legal arguments pertaining to the building and concentrate on the common goal for all: to relocate and bring an end to the mistrust, suspicions and a psychologically poisoned working environment, whereby working relationships are highly strained,”

Maja said.

“This stand-off is in no one’s interest.

“Actually, it is working against the interest of the people of South Africa.

“Neither the labour unions nor the

government departments have anything to gain from this continued state of affairs.”

Health workers since the start of construction, have been working in the building without protest.

Civitas was also earlier in the year, declared safe for occupation said the Tshwane emergency services.

“We have found the building to meet fire minimum safety requirements,” said Tshwane emergency service spokesperson Charles Mabaso.

He said in March, an inspection by emergency services was conducted and they were happy to find that the building met the minimum national building regulation requirements and was safe for occupation.

“We looked at escape doors, if fire extinguishers were working and not expired, fire suppression systems and the like,” he said.

Mabaso said Tshwane emergency services could not intervene if the workers had any concerns regarding the structural integrity of the building or the construction that was taking place.

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