

■ THEFT

North Durban cops hang on new phone line

Local station has been down for 'months'

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THE telephone infrastructure in Durban North is being upgraded by Telkom after the area's police station has been without telephone lines for over a month due to repeated cable theft.

The absence of telephone lines for the police station has angered Durban North residents, who described the situation as a service delivery failure.

The telecommunications provider said an investigation revealed that the area had suffered multiple copper cable thefts.

"It's become unsustainable to maintain copper services and the cables will not be replaced at this site," said Telkom.

Telkom said, as part of the company's migration to new technology, the area would be serviced through a metro ethernet (ME).

"Services will resume as soon as the installation is completed," said Telkom.

Telkom added that the benefit of ME technology was that it would deliver better service that would not be affected by weather or theft.

SAPS spokesperson Colonel Thembe Mbele said police received a written response from Telkom that the company would not be replacing the copper cables.

"It's their policy that if cables have been stolen, after the fifth incident they will not replace them," said Mbele.

She said the police had made an application for ITP lines, which are similar to cellphones.

"We've submitted an application and are now awaiting approval and installation," she said.

Mbele added that they had contacted all local media houses, informing them of the station's predicament and requesting that the public use the police emergency number 10111 to report serious incidents or crime.

"This development is extremely frustrating for the public as well as police officers and we hope to have the matter resolved soon," she said.

An angry resident, who asked not to be named, said that for taxpayers it was unacceptable that the Durban North police station was not contactable by telephone.

Durban North councillor Shaun Ryley said it was his understanding that the lines had been down for months, adding that it had been frustrating for some residents who tried to call the station.

"Thankfully, the 10111 number is still operational, and that's the number residents should use as the first port of call," he said.

Ryley said the police department and Department of Public Works at provincial and national level should be stepping in to rectify the situation or provide an alternative and lasting solution.

"Coupled with this is the fact that some air conditioning units are not operational, making the working conditions very difficult."