

Help for Cyclone Eloise victims is on the way

Joseph Ntimba ka Masiah

MBOMBELA - The MEC of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta), Mandla Msibi, said disaster relief for the victims of Eloise in the province is under way.

At a media briefing held at the Disaster Management Centre in Mbombela on Thursday, Msibi said the province had suffered the severity of the cyclone's rain storms that uprooted trees and electricity poles, damaged roads, bridges, dams and water pumps, blew off roofs, misplaced families and claimed lives.

Msibi urged the victims of floods to make use of the disaster toll-free number 0800-202-507 to report incidents.

"Apart from reporting the damage themselves, councillors and community development workers have a role to play in reporting damages to the local municipalities," he said.

"The Bushbuckridge Local Municipality (BLM) was the most severely affected in the Ehlanzeni District, with further infrastructure damage to roads, dams, water pumps and bridges. Then we had Nkomazi, City of Mbombela and Thaba Chweu local municipalities," Msibi explained.

More than 100 houses in Ehlanzeni were severely damaged. Msibi also said more than 10 fatalities were reported in the province



Cogta HOD Sam Ngubane and MEC Mandla Msibi.

and the bodies of some of the victims had been recovered.

"We wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families for the tragic loss of their loved ones. We hope they will find closure," he said.

The department said it was a procedure, that once damage has occurred, an

assessment has to be made before any steps of rebuilding could take place. The assessment is conducted with the objective of making a determination about the extent of the damage and the cost implications. Msibi said the Department of Human Settlements is set to conduct an assessment on the damaged houses for reconstruction.

"The floods have come at a time when we are at war with the Covid-19 pandemic, and it becomes difficult to work effectively in addressing the damage caused by Eloise as, at the same time, we need to adhere to the Covid-19 rules and regulations," he said.

Msibi disclosed that his department is working in collaboration with other departments such as human settlements, public works, health, social development and agriculture, rural development, land and environmental affairs, to address these incidents.

He said victims of the floods were given tents, blankets, food parcels and tarpaulins by BLM, in collaboration with the Ehlanzeni District and the Red Cross.

Msibi said, "It is regrettable that human tragedies occur despite efforts to prevent such. The lives we lost are way too many, considering the efforts to prevent such unfortunate occurrences. We reiterate our call to our communities to avoid crossing rivers and dams. It is a costly risk. We also call on our communities to avoid residing in areas not suitable for human settlement."

He lastly thanked all the municipalities, sector departments and non-governmental organisations for partnering with Cogta in supporting distressed families and for attending to the infrastructure damages.