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SERVICES AFFECTED

Three state departments get notices to evacuate unsafe office building



NOTICES were issued to the Department of Health, Department of Home Affairs and the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) situated on Bhaktivedanta Swami Circle in Chatsworth, to vacate the premises until the building has been certified structurally safe for use by an engineer. | KHAYA NGWENYA

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EARLIER this week, notices were issued to the Department of Health, Department of Home Affairs and the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) situated on Bhaktivedanta Swami Circle in Chatsworth, to vacate the premises as they were not suitable for occupation.

Two weeks ago, the *Daily News* reported flooding fears in a building shared by Sassa and Home Affairs in Chatsworth. In recent years, during heavy rains, the building would be flooded and services would be halted for cleaning purposes.

A source close to the publication said the Labour Department closed the building on Monday.

"They came to the office last week Friday after they received pressure



from the union, PSA (Public Servants Association of South Africa)... they inspected the entire building. On Monday morning, they came with a letter stating they are closing down the building and it must be vacated immediately," the source said.

Letters were addressed to Sassa, Home Affairs and Health (Chatsworth Mental Health Clinic).

"Sassa vacated the building as of Monday. Home Affairs is currently moving out. I'm not sure about the clinic," the source said. "Electricity will be cut off by next week Tuesday."

KwaZulu-Natal Employment and Labour Department spokesperson Nhlanhla Khumalo confirmed that notices were issued on Monday, November 6.

"All three departments were issued with notices," Khumalo said.

"The premises are already vacated and we understand that the Department of Public Works is dealing with the remedial actions."

Sassa KZN spokesperson Sandy Godlwana said the Chatsworth Service Centre has been declared unsafe for occupation.

She said the Department of Labour has with immediate effect issued three prohibition notices in line with section

30 of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act of 1993.

Godlwana explained that the notice prohibits allowing any persons to access the premises until such time the structural integrity of the building has been certified safe for use by a structural engineer; it also prohibits the use of electricity until a valid electrical certificate of compliance is issued by a registered person and lastly; it prohibits allowing any person access into the premises until such time all health and hygiene issues have been addressed and remedial action is taken to eliminate such hazards.

"This means that Sassa is not allowed to occupy or use this office until all the safety issues raised in the three prohibition notices are resolved," Godlwana said.

Sassa urges its clients to use uMlazi, Wentworth, Pinetown and Durban

local offices to access Sassa services.

KZN regional executive manager Thamo Mzobe said: "We are working around the clock to find alternative accommodation to ensure continued provision of service for the people of Chatsworth. We wish to apologise to our clients for any inconvenience that may be encountered during this period."

The *Daily News* was under the impression that only Home Affairs and Sassa were affected by flooding when it rains, however, yesterday, the publication learnt that even the mental health clinic was affected.

An anonymous source said that when it rains, it also leaks inside the building which has led to the walls being damaged inside.

The Departments of Home Affairs and Health had not commented at the time of publication.