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GRIEVANCES

Samwu members to march to Durban City Hall

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THE murders of eThekweni Municipality staff on municipal property and the lack of tools of trade are among the issues that have triggered a march by SA Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) members.

Samwu members who are employed by the City are set to march today from Currie's Fountain to the Durban City Hall to highlight grievances they say they have raised with the metro that have not been resolved.

In internal communication about the march, the office of City manager Musa Mbhele warned that the principle of "no work, no pay" would apply.

The circular said employees who participate in the march are prohibited from using council vehicles for that purpose. It added that all work-related trips must be authorised by line management.

It added that Water and Sanitation, Electricity, Metro Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Health, Disaster Management, Security Management, Parks, Recreation and Culture and Aquatic Safety were classified as "essential" services, and employees in these units were prohibited from engaging in industrial action, and therefore prohibited from participating in the march.

Samwu leader in Durban Xolani Dube, said: "There are a number of issues that we have been complaining about, that the employer has not addressed, which have led to this march."

Dube said in total, there were about 17 issues they had raised. He said chief among their concerns was the killing of staff members.

In the past few years, several staff have been murdered while at work, either on municipal premises or in City vehicles.

Last year in February, Amos Ngcobo was shot dead in his office in Springfield Road, and in March that year Phumzile Qatha was shot dead at an eThekweni Municipality water tanker depot in Ottawa.

Dube said other issues included the lack of the tools of the trade.

"There is a huge shortage and that is making it impossible to work.

"There is the issue of the performance bonuses that have not been paid: we signed an agreement with the municipality to say if the workers have performed, they should be paid their performance bonuses, that has not happened for several years," he said.

He said another issue was the grading of the municipality; he said that eThekweni as a metro should be at level 10, but is currently at level 8. An increase in the grading would trigger the increase of salaries of the staff.

"We have heard from our colleagues in other municipalities like Tshwane that those municipalities are now graded as level 10, that should also be happening here in eThekweni."

Dube said another issue they were fighting for was the insourcing of the staff members from the expanded public works programme.

An official from the South African Local Government Association explained that a municipality was graded based on its population growth, councillors, budget and staff complement.

The assessments are done by the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the Bargaining Council.

The official said the municipality that had the highest grade was Johannesburg, which was at Grade 9, and Durban was at 8.

eThekweni Municipality spokesperson Gugu Sisilana said: "The municipality is not anticipating major disruptions to municipal services. For employees who participate in this protected protest action without any authorised leave, the principle of 'no work, no pay and no benefits' will apply.

"All units in the municipality have contingency plans in place to ensure that there are no service delivery disruptions. Law enforcement will also be assigned along the march route to ensure the safety of residents and motorists."