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WORKING CONDITIONS

Call for urgent roof repairs

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POLICE unions and crime experts have raised concern after reports that a leaking roof at Port Shepstone SAPS has forced staff to work out of a container.

The roof has not been repaired since last year.

Approached for comment, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure said it was aware of the situation and plans were under way to renovate and repair the facility.

KwaZulu-Natal's permanent delegates to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) had concerns about the slow progress in addressing various administrative issues at the Port Shepstone police station during a recent visit to the facility.

The committee said it would ask the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to fast-track the repairs.

The police station has, meanwhile, been provided with a container which staff currently work from.

Bethuel Nkuna, Independent Policing Union of SA (Ipusa) president, said the dilapidated state of some police stations in South Africa was a concern.

"Ipusa has raised this matter before, as it is not only Port Shepstone police station that is in a poor condition. It should not have come to this situation where police staff are working out of a container. The problem should have been resolved when it was in its early stages," Nkuna said.

Nthabeleng Molefe, the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) KZN provincial secretary, said the union was frustrated that police were working in such bad conditions.

"We call on police and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to urgently intervene and repair the Port Shepstone police station," he said.

KZN violence monitor Mary de Haas said police often had these problems, with lack of maintenance of infrastructure and delays in the fixing of damaged property.

"SAPS management is responsible for maintenance. The Department of Public Works also has a role to play to ensure that maintenance is conducted at police buildings," she said.

Organised and financial crime investigator from IRS Forensic Investigations, Chad Thomas, said: "We know the SAPS has challenges. We cannot expect SAPS members to be effective if they work in deplorable conditions."

Thami Mchunu, director of Media and Stakeholder Relations in the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, said the department was aware of the challenges.

"We have decided to conduct a more detailed inspection to determine a total cost estimate for the renovations of the entire facility. This process is under way. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is not aware that SAPS at Port Shepstone are working from a container."