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Sassa building flooding fears

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WITH another wet weekend expected in Durban, there are fears that a building shared by the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) and the Department of Home Affairs in Chatsworth will be flooded again.

The building, which is reportedly owned by the national Department of Public Works, is dilapidated and when it rains water seeps through the ceiling and floods it.

The single-storey building is split into two, with Sassa on the left and Home Affairs on the right.

In pictures shared with the *Daily News*, the inside of the building was flooded, the walls appeared cracked and rotting, cleaners had plastic bags wrapped around their feet and were sweeping water out of the building.

In the videos, water was seen gushing from the ceiling and the toilets. The main hall was flooded and desks were covered in water, with some workstations covered with plastic bags to prevent water from affecting the electronics.

A source known to the *Daily News* said maintenance of the building had been neglected, and that had resulted in the building being dilapidated and a safety hazard to employees and the public.

"On Monday, the entire building was flooded. The ceiling appeared to be ready to collapse and there's a mouldy smell inside," the source said. "The building is always leaking. As a result, computers and furniture have been affected."

The source said the cleaners put plastic over their legs and feet while they cleared out the water.

"It's a nightmare! Every time it rains it's like this," the source said. "The staff is always anxious, always looking at the weather – and it is raining this weekend."

The source added that the building



THE single-storey building is split into two, with Sassa on the left and Home Affairs on the right. | TUMI PAKKIES/Independent Newspapers

is high and if the roof collapsed, people could lose their lives.

Community members who spoke to the *Daily News* on condition of anonymity had conflicting comments about the building. A man advised the community to not go to Home Affairs and said that the publication should visit when it had been raining.

"Don't come on the second day, come on the third day," the man said.

An elderly woman who visited Sassa said there was nothing wrong with the building. A young woman agreed with her. Then a group of three women said the building was fine and clean.

The *Daily News* visited the building on Wednesday and saw that parts of the

office area were still leaking and buckets had been placed to collect water from the leaks. Parts of the building floor had water stains. The outside of the building looked dilapidated. There was also a Home Affairs truck parked inside the property.

Sassa Kwazulu-Natal spokesperson Sandy Godlwana said Sassa engaged with the national Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (NDPWI) who are the owners of the building after it was transferred to them by the provincial Department of Public Works (PDPWI).

"National Public Works will send a team of inspectors who will assess the roof and structural integrity of the

building and ascertain the magnitude of damage, taking into account that there could be inherent damage to electricity, rainwater leakage etc.

"Sassa has also submitted a procurement instruction to the national Department of Public Works for it to look for office space for Sassa Chatsworth Local Office while assessment by inspectors continues," Godlwana said.

She added that it should be made clear that Sassa initiated these discussions to fix the problem. This initiative by Sassa culminated in the building ownership being transferred from PDPWI to NDPWI in November 2022.

NDPWI had committed to resolving the leaking roof in stages. Sassa has since

issued an instruction to the DPWI to procure alternative office accommodation.

The Department of Home Affairs had not responded by the time of publication.

Department of Public Works and Infrastructure spokesperson Thamsanqa Mchunu said the building was owned by the provincial Department of Public Works, but the national Department of Public Works and Infrastructure was in the process of acquiring it.

He said the process of transferring was in progress. Provincial Public Works has granted the DPWI permission to occupy and build.

"The national department has tasked



THE building was flooded. Cleaners had plastic bags wrapped around their feet and were pushing water out of the building. | SUPPLIED

departmental professional services to conduct an extensive assessment, including the structural integrity of the building. The report is being finalised," Mchunu said.

"In consultation with the client departments, the department wants to fast-track the procurement of alternative accommodation depending on availability on the ground."

Speaking to the *Daily News* yesterday, South African Weather Service forecaster Thandi Gumede said that while they would have a more accurate update today, there was an 80% chance of rain tomorrow and on Sunday in Durban.

This is due to an upper trough accompanied by a cold front that will bring wet and cold conditions over coastal provinces.

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