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School storm repairs to be fast tracked

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KZN Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube has directed provincial government to accelerate the urgent repairs to critical infrastructure like homes, schools and roads following the massive damage caused by thunderstorms and gale force winds over the weekend.

The storm wreaked havoc across KZN, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

On Monday, Dube-Ncube, joined by Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC Bongive Sithole-Moloi, Human Settlements and Public Works MEC Siphso 'KK' Nkosi and uMkhanyakude Mayor Siphile Mdaka, led a provincial government oversight visit to the mostly affected area of Mtubatuba.

"Many schools and homes have been damaged and electricity infrastructure destroyed, leaving people homeless and in the dark. As the province, our budget alone will not suffice to cover the cost of this devastation," said Dube-Ncube.

The premier said all responsible functionaries must ensure classrooms are urgently cleared of debris where possible and temporary classroom structures installed urgently, where there was total damage, to ensure the commencement of matric examinations is not disrupted.

"I am deeply saddened by the devastating impact of the recent storm on these communities. We are actively devising plans to assist all those affected. We are engaging national government, requesting support as we face this disaster," she said.

Six people sadly lost their lives during the storm, five of whom reside in the greater Mtubatuba area, and the sixth in Mpfana Municipality. Those who perished in Mtubatuba included three toddlers, one teenager and one adult, who died following structural collapses at their respective homesteads in Machibini and Maphelani.



KZN Premier Nomusa Dube -Ncube (right front) at the Sibisi homestead in Machibini

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Dube-Ncube affirmed the provincial government's commitment to aiding all grieving families with burial arrangements, with many having lost all their possessions in the storm.

"Some families have indicated that they are unable to conduct these services on their own, and we will make available the necessary support to make sure they are buried with dignity," said the premier.

Dube-Ncube called upon the dedicated teams on the ground, including ward councillors, council speakers and mayors, to ensure every affected citizen is profiled.

The province also pledged psychological

support to all those affected, and the assessment will continue until all victims are accounted for.

During the premier's visit to Mtubatuba, it was reported that more than 134 houses were destroyed in Somkhele and KwaMyeki areas.

Additionally, residents have reported the loss of valuable livestock, including goats, chickens and cows.

"We are grateful that the SANDF has stepped in to assist in clearing the affected areas, as some roads are blocked by fallen poles and cables, with debris scattered throughout," said Dube-Ncube.

"We also appreciate the speedy response

by other social partners like the South African Red Cross who are on the ground with the government.

"While we cannot determine the full extent of the damage, from the reports we have received, it is substantial," she said.

The premier added that the Department of Human Settlements will fast track the process of providing temporary structures to families whose houses were completely destroyed.

She further encouraged all those affected to reach out to their ward councillors or other public representatives, as the province prepares its interventions.