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## Power cut at Mdantsane court due to payment issues

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Power was cut off at the Mdantsane magistrate's court this week as it allegedly owed money to the Buffalo City Metro.

The court precinct had a total blackout on Monday afternoon, with the power restored on Wednesday afternoon, several sources within the court said.

BCM spokesperson Samkelo Ngwenya said: "We are not in a position to divulge customer information to third parties; the owners of the buildings are best placed to respond.

"However, it is worth noting that we are implementing the full credit control policy and we would like to urge customers that owe the municipality to make payment, or make arrangements with us so that we avoid having their properties shut down."

Justice & correctional services spokesperson Steve Mahlangu said management at the Mdantsane court were unaware of the outstanding bill until the Buffalo City Metro official arrived on Monday to switch the power off.

"The payment of municipal bills and services at the court

facility is the responsibility of the department of public works.

"They are therefore the relevant department to respond accurately on specifics regarding this matter, including details on how much is owed, due date for payment as well as challenges with services," Mahlangu said.

"The department can confirm that power has since been restored [on Wednesday] at the Mdantsane magistrate's court and that no other court has reported being affected by this issue."

Provincial public works spokesperson Sipokazi Ncan-

ywa said courts belonged to the national department of public works.

The national department had not responded to questions by the time of publication.

A regional National Prosecuting Authority spokesperson said: "I am informed that the power has been restored and the effect was minimal as there were contingencies available similar to when there is load-shedding."

Masimanyane Women's Rights International director Dr Lesley-Ann Foster slammed poor governance as the cause of the power outage.

"How does a court get its power cut off? What this means for ordinary people is that justice is delayed and this has a profound impact," she said.

On Wednesday, people attending court sat in waiting areas, some oblivious to the situation.

"I was given this date to return to court and I was wondering what was happening because no one said a thing since I got here," one woman said.

Another source said: "A lot of people came here for their cases such as gender-based violence and child maintenance ... Those cases that need recording ma-

chines will be postponed."

One court was operational on Wednesday when the Dispatch team arrived.

Another source said: "I was in there for hardly five minutes.

"The magistrate postponed the case and said something about there being no electricity."

Another said: "Luckily I was here to drop off documents that were outstanding in one of the offices."

Last week, the electricity supply was cut off at the Centane Post Office by Eskom due to nonpayment, leaving scores of villagers in limbo.

