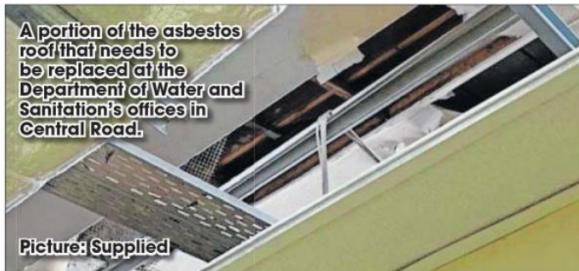


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Union calls for removal of asbestos roofing



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THE PUBLIC Servants Association (PSA) has called for the immediate removal of the asbestos roof at the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) offices in Central Road, Beaconsfield, to prevent potential health hazards.

A prohibition notice was issued by the Department of Employment and Labour on January 31 due to ongoing construction at the premises.

The DWS was also informed that it had failed to contain asbestos material at the workplace after a notice of non-compliance was issued on July 22, 2024.

PSA Northern Cape provincial manager Steve Ledibane indicated that labour inspectors issued the prohibition notice because there was a danger of building materials and bricks injuring staff members working on the construction site.

"Renovations to break down some of the hard walls were temporarily halted in the interests of the occupational health and safety of employees," said Ledibane.

He added that the department had relocated affected staff members to the boardroom this week, away from the construction site.

"We are satisfied that the necessary steps were taken," he noted.

However, he pointed out that the asbestos roofing had yet to be replaced.

"While we have not received any reports of employees falling ill, it is important to prevent asbestos-related diseases. Symptoms may only develop after many years of exposure," said Ledibane.

Department of Water and Sanitation spokesperson Amogelang Moholoeng said the department was complying with the prohibition

notice by not working in sections of the premises where construction was under way.

"The department received a second notice on the same date for failure to identify all asbestos-containing material by a competent person. No prohibition was issued in this regard," he explained.

Moholoeng added that the department had to identify asbestos-containing material in the workplace, since the building was leased through the national Department of Public Works.

"The request for the verification of whether there is asbestos material in the building was made to the landlord through the national Department of Public Works and we are awaiting the report."

Moholoeng stated that the department was continuing to operate in unrestricted sections of the building.

"The prohibition notice is limited to areas where construction work is taking place and not the entire office. A competent person must conduct an assessment and compile a report to determine whether asbestos is present. To date, no staff members have reported any asbestosis cases."

He added that contractors were installing ventilation units.

"For the safety of the employees, upon the advice of the Department of Labour, affected occupants were temporarily relocated to other areas in the building. The landlord has undertaken to complete all construction work by February 20."

Moholoeng stated that the landlord had been requested to submit a safety file for the construction work.

"Work has currently been placed on hold pending the submission of the safety file."