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Broken windows at the Empangeni Magistrate's Court have remained unfixed since the destructive storm of April 2022

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No phone lines for over a year for court officials who buy own data and airtime

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THE Empangeni Magistrate's courthouse is an eyesore; however, inside its walls the situation at this vital public amenity is even worse.

The front of the building in Union Street has several broken windows from the destructive storm that hit the town in April 2022.

"It's actually sad to say that this is our court where justice is supposed to be given," said an attorney, on condition of anonymity.

"If you've been to the High Court of Pietermaritzburg, that's how our court building should look - that's the level and standard we should be keeping to, but, unfortunately, this court falls short," he said.

The outside of the building is just the tip of the problems.

For starters, the court has had no telephone lines for almost two years - a situation that also exists at the Richards Bay court; severely impacting prosecutors whose urgent services require a high level of efficiency.

Emails reportedly work intermittently, and court officials dig into their own pockets for data and airtime.

"We sit in an office that has no phone lines. 'You're better off sending us messages tied to carrier pigeons,'" said one frustrated court employee. Repeated appeals to head office do not achieve any results.

Another major issue is space availability for proper offices for maintenance matters, offices and registrars, which are all in containers.

Technology issues also negatively impact proceedings, such as when the recording system

does not work, matters have to be postponed, affecting clients and witnesses who travel from outlying areas.

"Sometimes clients will be waiting from the morning and will only leave in the afternoon, waiting for their matter to be heard.

"Whether it's as a result of a shortage of

magistrates or so forth, your matter should be expedited as quickly as possible."

Meanwhile, the matter of the dilapidated building is being bounced between the departments of Public Works (DPW) and Justice (DoJ), with the former saying DoJ has not allocated budget to carry out upgrades.



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