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MEDIA STATEMENT

Public Works appoints specialists to investigate safety of the Bluff Naval Base site

The Department of Public Works has appointed a professional team to prepare a detailed remedial plan for the faulty pump station in which 6 people were killed at the Bluff Naval base in Durban last week.

The deceased, three workers and three South African National Defence Force members, were overcome by gases emanating from the sewer facility. Two of the workers, Phelelani Zondi (27) and Thokozani Makhoba (30) were employed by a service provider of the Department of Public Works. Another was an independent contractor working nearby. The SANDF members died while they tried to rescue the distressed workers.

In terms of the contract - the water, solid waste and pump specialist contractor is required to test the quality of air in the vicinity of the facility and repair the pumps in accordance to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The plans should be approved by a qualified engineer.

The appointment of the specialist company comes after the Department of Labour issued a prohibition notice. Presently, the site remains cordoned off as it has been declared a crime scene.

In Parliament this week Minister Thulas Nxesi expressed deep sadness about the tragic loss of lives.

“On behalf of the Public Works sector, I wish to express deep sadness about the tragic loss of life of six people on Friday morning at the Durban Naval Base.

“At the weekend, we visited the grieving families in uMlazi and Nkandla to convey our sincere condolences. During these heart-breaking visits, I was accompanied by

our Director General, Mziwonke Dlabantu and several senior officials from the Department.

“It was not easy to face the families. They were shattered and grief-stricken. Their loved ones had left their homes to earn living so that their families could survive. It was a normal working day.

But later on Friday they received the devastating news about their untimely deaths,” said Minister Nxesi.

The departmental delegation led by the Regional Manager will visit the two families on the 24th of February 2017 to finalise logistics for the funerals on Saturday 25th February 2017.

The Kwazulu-Natal Contractors Forum has donated R50 000 which will be split between the Makhoba and Zondi families. The two workers will both be buried on Saturday, in Nkandla and Greytown respectively.

ENDS

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