



public works
& infrastructure

Department:
Public Works and Infrastructure
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Statement by Minister Patricia de Lille

Department of Public Works and Infrastructure working on all fronts to respond to COVID 19

Today I would like to update the media on the work by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) within our mandate to respond to COVID 19.

Last week I briefed the media on the properties being identified by DPWI that could be used as quarantine sites.

Our officials are working around the clock with officials from the Health Department to secure sites for quarantine once approved by the Health Department.

To date DPWI has mapped properties across all provinces in all 44 districts and 8 metros. The work to identify more sites is ongoing. Currently, the list we have ready for assessment with the Department of Health has 52 properties of which 31 are under the custodianship of DPWI. Most of these are state-owned sites.

Some of the sites identified under the ownership of DPWI are offices, houses and multi-purpose centres.

The DPWI has also enlisted the assistance of the Presidential Coordinating Commission (PICC) to map these properties to ensure that we cover all 44 districts and 8 metros.

The DPWI's work in identifying properties is ongoing. We have identified sites under our ownership and we are also assessing properties under the ownership of provincial Public Works departments.

The private sector has also offered sites across the country such as hotels, other holiday properties and hospitals and we are assessing sites that have been offered by the private sector.

At this time I want to thank the private sector for their willingness to come on board and offer their properties as quarantine sites.

The response has been overwhelming and indeed we are grateful for the generosity and solidarity being displayed by the private sectors.

So far there is a total of 16, 373 beds can be accommodated in the potential sites that have been identified for quarantine facilities. These are a combination of government and private sector facilities. DPWI is working with the Department of Health, who ultimately has to sign off on whether the facility complies with the quarantine requirements.

There is strict criteria that needs to be applied before confirming that a property can be used as a quarantine site and teams are working to verify sites with the approval of the Department of Health.

Once these checks have been done, we will inform the private sector of which properties we will use as quarantine sites.

With regard to the Beitbridge border, the contractor is on site and has assigned eight teams – each responsible for each 5km segment of the 40km of the fence that is being replaced.

The teams are busy with site clearance for the new fence alignment and the works for the fence posts, along with the concrete works will commence on 26 March 2020.

Last week, I also addressed the issue of the impact of COVID 19 on payment of DPWI suppliers and service providers before the end of the financial year on Tuesday 31 March 2020.

As of this morning, all invoices within the possession of the DPWI Finance unit has been processed and are up to date.

The Finance unit within the department has put measures in place to continue processing all payments as and when they arrive at finance for payment.

Since my update to the media last week, we have also been looking at how the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) can possibly support the efforts to curb and contain the spread of the virus.

DPWI is currently contracting NPOs and has started the recruitment of 20 400 youth across the 44 districts to be ready once the Minister of Health formally requests our assistance.

The Department of Health initially requested EPWP participants to embark on the following activities:

- Distributions of sanitizers and soap;
- Education on proper hand washing techniques;
- Demonstration on constructing Tippy Taps in areas without hand washing facilities;
- Emergency treatment of water in areas without adequate supply;
- Disinfection of high touch areas in high risk areas;
- Conduct clean up campaigns.

In order for the above to be implemented, DPWI will work with the Department of Health to:

- Train EPWP employees who in turn will train the youth employed through the NPOs. Training is to begin as soon as we receive the go-ahead from the Department of Health.
- Ensure that protective clothing and materials for the youth are procured before they commence with their activities. Specification for the protective clothing (and possible suppliers) will be provided by the Department of Health.

Lastly, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is one of the Programmes that is critical in providing job creation for up to 800 000 people at all spheres of government. I am in the process of compiling a Directive that will allow for those currently under the EPWP Programme, which will be directly impacted by the lockdown, to still be able to draw a wage.

This will ensure that there is no negative impact on these individuals financially during the lockdown.

ENDS

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