



public works
& infrastructure

Department:
Public Works and Infrastructure
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**Media Statement by Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia
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Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) response to COVID

19

On the 15th of March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation with regards to the Covid-19 outbreak, this comes shortly after the declaration of the corona virus as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization.

The President has declared a National State of Disaster, subsequently outlining a number of emergency measures to be implemented to mitigate the risk of the virus. There has been an action plan put in place by each Department of Government.

Government is implementing additional measures as part of its Integrated National Response Plan, approved by Cabinet. It includes drastic measures to manage the disease, protect the people of our country and reduce the impact of the virus on our society and on our economy.

Government is also calling on all businesses including mining, retail, banking, farming to ensure that they take all necessary measures to intensify hygiene control.

The management of malls, entertainment centres and other places frequented by large numbers of people should also bolster their hygiene control.

Citizens are urged to remain calm and continue to practice hygiene and preventative behaviour by washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. South Africans are encouraged to minimise physical contact with other people and practise social distancing.

DPWI Response to COVID 19:

One of the aspects of my action plan is the communication to all stakeholders within the Property Sector, Built Environment and the Construction Industry.

This week I have engaged with various industry bodies such as the South African Property Owners' Association (SAPOA), the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA), and entities under the DPWI such as Agrément SA (ASA), the Council for the Built Environment (CBE); and the Construction Industry Board (CIDB) amongst others.

My communication with these entities was done via email and the majority of these organisations and industry bodies have put measures in place to do their part in response to COVID 19 as we all work together to contain the spread of the virus.

While Government through the President and the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize are leading the response, there is a role for all departments and sectors of society to play to ensure that we stop the spread of the virus and keep our citizens safe.

The construction and built environment industry is a key sector in our economy and all sectors need to do their part as we work to combat and contain the spread of the virus while doing everything we can to prevent business and service delivery from being negatively impacted.

Before we detail the measures by the industry bodies in the built environment and construction sectors, the DPWI has also been working on our response to the virus for areas within our mandate.

Quarantine sites:

One of the key tasks for DPWI has been to identify State-owned buildings which could possibly be used as quarantine sites in all 44 districts and 8 metros. So far we have identified 37 properties in various provinces.

Some of these sites will be available to people living in informal settlements where there are no such facilities available.

Teams from our head office and in all regional offices have been visiting all districts to assess properties and this process is ongoing. Some of the sites have already been communicated to the Minister of Health.

We have also communicated to Minister Mkhize that DPWI is engaging all provincial Public Works departments and local governments to ensure that we are able to identify possible quarantine sites in all 44 districts and 8 metros in cases where there are no available DPWI owned properties.

As we confirm that sites can be used as quarantine facilities, they are communicated to the Minister of Health – this process is ongoing.

Border:

Another key intervention by DPWI is the installation of a fence at Beitbridge border between South Africa and Zimbabwe.

This is to ensure that no undocumented or infected persons cross into the country and vice-versa.

This is in line with one of the measures announced by the President in that South Africa's borders and ports are to be secured with immediate effect.

The President stated that 35 of the 53 land entry points will be closed. This measure will, however, not be effective if the fences at the border are not secure, which in many places, they are not.

In terms of Section 27 (2) (l) of the Disaster Management Act, No 57 of 2002, I have invoked emergency procurement procedures in relation to the erection and repairs of the border fences, east and west of the Beitbridge Border Post.

This resulted in the following process unfolding in this past week:

I issued a directive to my Department on Monday 16 March, to allow them to proceed with emergency procurement procedures.

On Tuesday 17 March the due diligence and site inspections were undertaken between DPWI, Defence and the Defence Force. It was identified that a total of 40 kilometres of 1.8 meter high fence has to be erected, 20 kilometres on either side of the Beitbridge Land Port of Entry.

Yesterday, 18 March, the specifications were finalised and all of the emergency supply chain management processes were undertaken.

Yesterday, 18 March, the contractor was appointed.

Today, 19 March, the site will be handed over to the Contractor to commence with the work.

Due to this being an emergency, my Department has instructed the Contractor to substantially increase the number of teams deployed and the rate of delivery tenfold.

The cost of the project is approximately R37.2million and implementation will unfold as follows:

All 40 kilometres of fence will be finished within one month. Local labour will be sourced by the Contractor. In order to further expedite this process, Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has put the following in place:

A dedicated Project Manager has been identified and will be deployed to supervise the Project and ensure that all aspects run smoothly.

Weekly payments will be made to the Contractor for work completed, as certified by the Project Manager.

DPWI will check on a daily basis that the Contractor is in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety standards and COVID-19 practical guidelines.

The Impact of COVID 19 on service providers, contractors and suppliers as a result of national and provincial governments imminent 2019/20 end of financial year:

The construction industry and built environment sector, especially when working for national and provincial governments, are going to be faced with severe financial crisis over the next two to three months, due to the end of our financial year being 31 March 2020.

This, in fact is not only under DPWI but in all national and provincial government departments.

I have communicated this to the President to determine what solution we can come up with to assist in expediting payments for work done or maybe extending the payment authorisation payment period for the 2019/20 financial year beyond 31 March.

Most companies have been told to close their doors and send staff home. This will further mean that there will be a delay in signing new contracts in the new financial year, meaning there is a slim possibility that they would only be able to commence work in May and invoice in August, being paid 30 days later at the end of August 2020.

This in essence means that many/most professional service providers, contractors and material suppliers will have no revenue coming in for at least three months and maybe as long as five months.

Engagements with Provincial Departments:

In our engagements with the provincial departments of Public Works, the Free State Public Works department has advised that two of the province's hospitals – the Trompsburg Hospital and the Ladybrand Hospital can be used as quarantine centres as these are currently being used below capacity.

The KwaZulu Natal Department of Public Works has advised that a number of properties are available for use as quarantine sites in Durban North, Pietermaritzburg, Richards Bay and Port Shepstone.

The Limpopo Provincial Public Works Department has informed us that they can avail four properties to possibly be used as quarantine sites. These are located in Waterberg, Vhembe, Capricorn and Mopani districts.

The North West Provincial Department of Public Works has advised that they can avail more than 130 sites across the province including four hospitals.

Engagements with industry bodies (public and private entities):

In terms of the response and actions by the built environment and construction industries, below are some of the responses we have received during our engagements:

South African Property Owners' Association (SAPOA) represents a large portion of role-players in the commercial property field and represents approximately 1000 companies and organisations. It's members own and control about 90% of all commercial, retail, office and industrial properties in SA to the value of approximately R1 trillion and constitute some of the largest rate payers in South Africa.

Action plan: SAPOA has sent various notices to industry over the last week as the industry is one which interacts daily with members of the public at their offices and at shopping centres.

They have communicated to their members what interventions can be implemented to reduce and delay community transmission of the virus. They have stressed to their members that these measures must be implemented.

SAPOA has sent out notices to shopping centres across the country with detailed measures which must be implemented such as hand hygiene and environmental cleaning.

Some of the key instructions they have sent to the shopping centres include: routine cleaning of frequently used surfaces, intensifying rigorous cleaning and sanitising efforts at frequently used surfaces such as seating, hand rails, shopping trollies, credit card machines, elevators.

They have also instructed that there should be an increased frequency of cleaning, removing items that cannot be cleaned such as stuffed toys, magazines, increasing ventilation, providing access to hand-washing facilities and hand sanitising dispensers and if appropriate setting up testing centres in parking lots at malls in consultation with public health officials.

SAPOA has taken a decision not to host any event with more than 100 people until the end of July 2020. They have therefore postponed the SAPOA Annual Conference to mid-December.

They have suspended face-to-face events and academic courses until further notice and committee meetings will be held online and via teleconference.

The South African Council for Project and Construction Management Professionals

The South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) is empowered by section 18 of Act No. 48 of 2000 to certify, register and regulate the Project and Construction Management Professions.

Their role is to create an enabling environment for the promotion, growth and transformation of Built Environment Management Professions through advocacy, research and best practice.

Action Plan: the organisation has set up a task team to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. Its aim is to formulate and implement measures, which are chiefly guided by the measures mandated by the Presidency and inter-ministerial committee, required to safe guard employees. I thought it prudent to share my details with you as I am the chairperson of this task team.

The Independent Development Trust (IDT)

The IDT is a DPWI entity which manages the implementation and delivery of critically needed social infrastructure programmes on behalf of government. The organisation reports to the Minister of Public Works & Infrastructure who is the shareholder representative.

Action Plan: The IDT has circulated guidelines that guide employees in dealing with the spread of COVID-19. The same guidelines will be shared with service providers doing work with the IDT.

The IDT has also made available a Declaration Protocol and Form in the reception areas of both national office and regional offices to manage external visitors coming into the organisation.

The IDT is in the process of finalising the communicate to service providers and contractors who are undertaking work on behalf of the IDT and the communicate will be sent out today.

The organisation is in the process of finalising the communicate to NPOs under the EPWP who are undertaking work on behalf of the IDT and the communicate will be sent out starting today, 19 March 2020.

The IDT also plans to develop a community involvement plan in the next 7 working days.

The South African Council for Architectural Profession.

The South African Council for the Architectural Profession is the official regulator for the architectural profession with over 10 000 Registered Architectural Candidates and Professionals.

Action plan: The organisation has said that their offices will remain open for now and will close their offices should the situation deteriorate to the point where they need to close their offices.

They have also asked everyone entering their offices to use the hand sanitizer at their entrances and have discouraged face-to-face meetings with external stakeholders.

They have suspended the use of their biometric system and are regularly sanitising all door handles and furniture twice a day.

In addition, all their cleaning staff are required to wear protective clothing such gloves and masks while cleaning.

The SA Council for the Property Valuers Profession (SACPVP)

The SACPVP is a statutory body established in terms of section 2 of The Property Valuers Profession Act, 2000.

SACPVP promotes a high level of education and training of practitioners in the Property Valuers Profession to facilitate full recognition of professionalism in the valuers profession, both locally and abroad.

Action Plan: They have postponed the Council meeting of the 24th March as some members were supposed fly into the meeting. Arrangements for round robin decisions on crucial matters like Budget approval to be used.

The Council intends to issue a communique to valuers encouraging them to protect themselves when conducting property inspection and when preparing valuation reports.

Everyone entering the SACPVP offices must apply the sanitising liquid provided by the office. Their facilities have bottles for sanitisation by staff and visitors (a few at a time the organisation is limiting interactions with walk-in registered persons and the public).

The SACPVP have also encouraged their voluntary associations to postpone all immediate workshops that will attract a sizeable number of attendees.

The South African Institute of Valuers

The South African Institute of Valuers is a national society of professional real estate valuers. The Institute is dedicated to serving the public interest by advancing high standards for members of the appraisal profession. It has around 1100 members representing at least 50% of registered valuers in South Africa.

Action plan: Since the announcement by the President, they have made sure to keep a good distance and avoid physical contact. They undertake regular sanitising and hand washing.

They have advised their members to take precautionary measures as instructed by the President and the World Health Organisation.

All scheduled workshops and seminars have been postponed until they are given the go ahead that events can go ahead.

They are exploring video and telephone conferencing for meetings with a large amount of participants.

Agrément SA (ASA):

Is an entity of DPWI. ASA stimulates innovation in the construction industry by conducting testing, performance and certification of new products and methodologies in the built environment.

Action Plan: Following President Ramaphosa's address on Sunday night regarding the pandemic COVID-19, the Agrément South Africa (ASA) continues to align to the decisions taken by the Cabinet and the Departments of Public Works and Health in support of preventing the spread of this pandemic.

ASA has recommended to its staff and network to use the Department of Health's official government Covid-19 support service WhatsApp platform to stay abreast of all developments and prevent the spreading of fake news.

In terms of ASA operations, they are implementing the use of digital platforms to host all interactions with our members, stakeholders and meetings.

They have called on all clients, stakeholders and service providers not to cancel interventions with ASA but to adapt swiftly to digital alternatives.

ASA has also encouraged members to limit physical contact, remain vigilant and disciplined in the hygiene protocols as outlined by the Department of Health.

The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)

ECSA is a statutory body for engineering profession. It promotes a high level of education and training of practitioners, professionalism in the engineering profession.

Action Plan: ECSA has heeded to the guidelines as communicated by the President on 15 March 2020. The following measures have been put in place:

Deactivated the biometric system and keep the main doors to reduce the risk of infections;

- Deployed sanitizers at strategic locations around the building;

- Provided each employee with wet wipes to regularly clean surfaces;

- Constant monitoring of bathroom soaps and sanitizer sprays;

- Creating awareness campaigns with employees and visitors.

- Suspension of meetings where internal facilities are inadequate, from the 1 meter spacing requirement;

- Making use of video conferencing where possible.

- CSA provides a 24 hour guidance and health counselling service to employees and family members, through an independent service provider

The Council for the Built Environment (CBE)

CBE promotes and protects the interests of the public in the built environment through ongoing human resource development. It accredits all educational institutions training professionals in the built environment and administers a code of conduct for professionals.

Action Plan: The CBE has communicated with their employees that their health and safety and that of their stakeholders and communities is a top priority.

They have implemented work-from-home policies for employees effective from 20 March 2020. Reduced staff will be available at their office for any urgent telephonic enquiries.

The CBE has also limited physical visits at their offices and all non-critical meetings will be cancelled/postponed until further notice.

Employees have been encouraged to leverage technology (i.e. Skype, WhatsApp Conference Calls) to conduct meetings virtually where possible and limiting the number of external visitors to their office.

They have displayed information posters and fact sheets at their offices around COVID 19, they have circulated the Health Department's Whatsapp helpline.

There is daily cleaning/disinfecting common surfaces such as kitchen table tops; taps and door handles and have ordered face masks for employees.

The Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)

CIDB is tasked to ensure sustainable growth, capacity development and empowerment in the construction industry and promotes improved industry performance and best practice.

Action Plan: The CIDB has implemented preventative measures to assist in reducing the spread of the virus.

They have placed awareness information brochures in strategic areas for staff to familiarise themselves with the facts about the virus and prevention tips.

Hand sanitizer has been made available in their offices, specific doors will be kept open to avoid many people handling the doors. Where a door needs to be closed for security reasons, hand sanitizer will be made available next to the door.

South African Council for the Quantity Surveyors Professions

The council provides for the registration of professionals, candidates and specified categories in the quantity surveying profession.

Action Plan: The organisation has postponed the QS Research conference which was due to be held in September 2020. All their Council meetings will be conducted through ZOOM.

For Candidate exams, these will continue for now but they have implemented the 1 metre spacing between candidates writing the exams while sanitizers have also been placed in the exam rooms.

Candidates have been advise to stay at home if they suspect of having any symptoms of flu. Their office furniture is being disinfected daily.

Strict health and safety measures are being implemented on construction sites to avoid any spread of the virus.

In closing, I want to urge all South Africans to seek medical care immediately after developing symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. If you think you might have contracted the virus, you can call the National Institute of Communicable Diseases NICD helpline (0800 029 999) and you will be advised on possible testing facilities.

Useful links for information and prevention tips:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>

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