

## **PSA concerned about Covid-19 as public servants told to go back to work**

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PSA concerned about Covid-19 as public servants told to go back to work By Nelly Ndlovu - 11/05/2020 Safety preparations for public service employees to return to work under the Covid-19 level four regulations should have been made long before workers were recalled for duty, the Public Servants Association said on Saturday. The PSA, representing more than 240 000 public servants, had noted with serious concern the address delivered by Public Service and Administration Minister Senzo Mchunu on Friday about the lack of readiness of the public service to return to work, the union said in a statement. It was disappointing that the minister had, only a week after level four regulations cut in, announced that plans would be developed for the return of public servants, while in fact public servants had been performing duties since the inception of the lockdown. "The minister was surely aware that a vast number of public servants have already, since 4 May 2020, been recalled, reporting for duty [at] various departments and agencies, though lacking PPE [personal protection equipment], screening of employees, and deep cleaning of offices," the PSA said. "This acknowledgement is late, and preparations should have been made before employees were recalled. The PSA is aware that many public servants were already recalled to the workplace and in some instances sent back, thereby causing unnecessary and further exposure to the virus. The PSA will not allow its members to be exposed to dangerous working conditions unnecessarily." To add insult to injury, Home Affairs Minister Aaron Motsoaledi now intended to take the labour and employment department to court for closing down non-compliant home affairs offices, instead of ensuring that the regulations were complied within his department, the PSA said. The labour and employment department was merely ensuring that the Covid-19 regulations were complied with, even by the state as the employer, and which was supposed to set an example for citizens and employers. "To add to the current crisis, a number of departments identified by the PSA have been closed, as they were failing to comply with 'return to work' regulations, leaving the general public frustrated because they are unable to access vital services." The recent debacle at the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) involving grant payments was a prime example that departments were not placing urgent emphasis on health and safety issues to prevent the infection rate increasing, the PSA said. The PSA had noted that the infection rate among public servants was increasing at an alarming rate, with the minister indicating that 511 healthcare workers had been infected. Therefore, central co-ordination by Mchunu of plans by departments to return to work was vital and should not be left to individual departments. At the moment, each department applied and interpreted regulations differently, and kept on exposing members and the public at large to the virus. The department had failed to co-ordinate and ensure consistency in the public service. The PSA strongly advised Mchunu to ensure that public servants did not return to the workplace without having the necessary equipment and safety measures in place, and that all workplaces complied with the Covid-19 regulations and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the PSA said. Minnie Dlamini-Jones tweeted about how plans for her summer body were put on hold by the lockdown and her many trips to the fridge. But the beauty is not phased by gaining a little weight as winter fashion will cover up any extra weight that the star might pick up during the chilly seasons. Read more Source: IOL TAGSPSA concerned about Covid-19Public Servants AssociationPublic Service and Administration MinisterSenzo Mchunu