

MEDIA RELEASE	Collapse of public-sector infrastructure poses serious health and safety threat to employees and services
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) representing more than 240 000 public-sector employees, is dismayed by health and safety standards in the public sector with South Africa facing a crisis as essential infrastructure deteriorates at an alarming rate.

Health and safety standards continue to plummet. The implications employees serving the public are immediate and extremely concerning. Public-sector employees are exposed to serious risks owing to the failure to maintain infrastructure and the erosion of safety protocols. From crumbling buildings, water shortages and outdated facilities to poor working conditions that jeopardise the well-being of employees, the situation is untenable. The lack of investment in infrastructure manifests daily for many public-sector employees. This includes dangerously outdated equipment, inadequate ventilation, insufficient emergency systems, and environments that are not compliant with basic health and safety standards. Employees are being forced to execute their duties in unsafe and hazardous conditions, which are detrimental to their health and compromise their ability to perform their roles effectively.

The implications of these issues extend beyond the well-being of employees. Public services, such as healthcare, education, and emergency response services, rely on functional infrastructure and robust safety measures. As the situation worsens, the quality of these services decline, impacting on citizens in need of these services. This situation must be addressed immediately to avoid lead to long-term consequences for the safety and stability of communities.

Over the past two months, various cases of non-compliance of with occupational health and safety measures were identified by PSA members. These including a water crisis at Mmametlhake Hospital in Mpumalanga, the non-cooperation by the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) in such issues in the Northern Cape, failure to restore water supply at the Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal, unsafe conditions at Livingstone Hospital in the Eastern Cape, unbearable working conditions at Refugee Camp offices at the Department of Home Affairs in Gqeberha, contaminated drinking water at Sevontein Correctional Centre in KwaZulu-Natal, and the DEL's failure to uphold safety standards at is Sandton building in Gauteng.

The PSA implores government to urgently prioritise investment in public-sector infrastructure and reinforce health and safety measures. Immediate action is needed to ensure that the employees in service of communities are not left to work under hazardous conditions. Public-sector employees deserve a safe and secure environment, and the public deserves reliable and effective services. The PSA cannot allow the current collapse to continue unchecked.

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