

**MEDIA STATEMENT: KwaZulu-Natal ambulance crisis: PSA demands immediate action**

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**EMBARGO** None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the appalling state of ambulance services in the eThekweni District, in KwaZulu-Natal.

The failure by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health to provide adequate emergency medical services is grossly negligent and an unforgivable dereliction of duty. The lives of the Province's residents are being endangered by the Department's incapacity and apparent disregard for its most fundamental obligations.

Reports from communities indicate that many communities are without a single ambulance available to respond to emergencies. Highly skilled paramedics, trained to handle life-or-death situations, are rendered helpless and unable to attend to critical care calls owing to a crippling shortage of operational vehicles. This state of disrepair, where a significant portion of the Department's fleet is either broken down, trapped in perpetual maintenance, or starved of resources necessary to function, has created an untenable situation that is leading to avoidable loss of life.

The PSA has also learned that healthcare personnel, already stretched to the limits, are being denied basic protective equipment, including rain jackets, leaving them vulnerable whilst performing their duties in hazardous weather conditions. This places their health and safety at risk and further undermines their ability to serve communities effectively.

This gross mismanagement by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health is a disservice to the residents of the Province and cannot be allowed to continue. The PSA demands urgent intervention by the MEC of Health and the Head of Department to immediately address this escalating crisis. The Department must act swiftly to restore the ambulance fleet to full operational capacity, ensuring that no community is left without emergency care. All healthcare workers must be equipped with the necessary tools and protective gear to execute their duties safely and efficiently.

The Department of Health must prioritise the safety and well-being of residents of KwaZulu-Natal and the healthcare professionals who serve them. Should this intolerable situation persist, it will deepen the existing public health crisis and erode any remaining trust in government's ability to safeguard citizen's most basic rights. The PSA will hold the Department accountable for failures as the Union continues to pursue efforts to ensure that residents of KwaZulu-Natal have access to the emergency medical services they are entitled to.

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