

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA alarmed about widespread non-compliance with health and safety norms at public health institutions**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), despite being alarmed, is not surprised by the recent revelation by the Minister of Health that out of 3 092 public health facilities inspected, 1 866 were found to be non-compliant with occupational health and safety standards.

This outcome represents over 60% of the health institutions inspected. The Department of Health has failed to ensure compliance since the promulgation of norms and standards by the Office of Health Standards Compliance (OHSC).

The PSA has been driving the campaign to ensure a conducive work environment in pursuit of the health and safety of public-sector employees. The state of public health institutions leaves much to be desired as these often fail to meet even basic norms and standards, thus exposing employees and patients to risks. Rural provinces are leading in respect of non-compliance, with dilapidated and neglected buildings in the Eastern Cape standing at 496, Limpopo at 326, KwaZulu-Natal at 208, Mpumalanga at 178, the Free State at 182, and the Northern Cape at 127. Gauteng and the Western Cape have 87 and 71 such instances, respectively.

The inability of the Department to ensure infrastructure development and maintenance is a grave concern and does not bode well for the pending implementation of the National Health Insurance. The lack of compliance poses serious risks to employees and patients, potentially leading to increased incidents of workplace injuries and compromised patient care. Many clinics are struggling with inadequate resources, including insufficient medical supplies, outdated equipment, and a lack of proper staff training.

The allocation of more than R15 million for the OHSC to conduct further inspections of the facilities is a step in the right direction as the Department needs a clearer picture of the status of facilities. The PSA has called on the Department to conduct health and safety audits of all health facilities as some are regarded as death traps affecting service delivery. Some hospitals and clinics are on the verge of collapse, including, for example, Mapulaneng Hospital in Mpumalanga, Elim Hospital in Limpopo, and Tembisa Hospital in Gauteng. The PSA reiterates that there is a need for regular inspections, increased funding for infrastructure maintenance as well as training and development for healthcare workers, including managers, with OHSC norms and standards.

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