

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA alarmed by discovery of E-Coli contaminated drinking water at Sevontein Correctional Centre in KwaZulu-Natal
DATE	07 February 2025
EMBARGO	None
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) was alerted by members of the Union that they received proof from uMgungundlovu Municipality Environmental Health Department that the drinking water at Sevontein Correctional Centre in KwaZulu-Natal is not safe for human consumption.

This was confirmed in the Water Sampling Report issued by the Environmental Health Practitioner of uMgungundlovu District Municipality, dated 27 January 2025. Employees further informed the PSA that about 18 months ago, they noticed that tap water was muddy, brown or dark and immediately reported this to their managers. After that discovery, employees at the Centre and inmates fell ill with diarrhoea. The Department, however, never acted on the reports from employees.

The report prompted the PSA to write a letter to the Head of Centre for Sevontein Correctional Centre and to the KwaZulu-Natal Regional Office Deputy Director: Labour Relations, requesting an urgent bilateral meeting to discuss the matter as the continued consumption of unclean water could lead to several serious gastrointestinal illnesses. The Department of Correctional Services is by law required to take all necessary measures in ensuring that water is safe for consumption for employees and inmates at Sevontein Correctional Centre.

The damning report further states: "*The water results came back positive with E-Coli and coliforms. The acceptable microbial standards for water sampling in South Africa specify that there should be no detectable total coliforms and E-Coli (0 cfu/100ml). Therefore, as per results obtained it can be confirmed that water at Sevontein Correctional Centre is not fit for human consumption*". The state as employer is under obligation in terms of the provisions of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, read together with Hazardous Biological Agents Regulations, to provide and maintain as far as reasonably practicable a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees.

Employees are advised to bring their own drinking water and not drink the contaminated water until water purification has been conducted by the Department. The PSA urges the Department of Correctional Services in KwaZulu-Natal and Sevontein Correctional Centre management to immediately address this challenge and provide some 200 employees and more than 1 000 inmates at Sevontein Correctional Centre with clean drinking water.

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