

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA demands immediate investigation by Department of Employment and Labour and eThekweni Municipality following patient's death at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal
DATE	19 February 2025
EMBARGO	None
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is dismayed by the tragic and preventable fire at the KwaZulu-Natal Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital's C5 Psychiatric Ward on 18 February 2025, which resulted in the death of a patient, extensive damage to hospital beds, and serious risks to employees and other patients.

The fire was caused by a patient who was smoking inside the ward despite, highlighting severe safety failures in the Hospital. This devastating incident again exposes critical shortcomings in Hospital security, patient monitoring, and occupational health measures. The failure to enforce strict no-smoking policies in hospital wards, particularly in high-risk areas such as psychiatric units and oxygen-equipped wards is of extreme concern. The lack of effective security measures allowed patients to access and use cigarettes and lighters inside the Hospital premises. An inadequate oversight by healthcare management, resulted in serious occupational health and safety risks for patients and hospital employees.

The PSA calls for an immediate and thorough investigation by the Department of Employment and Labour and eThekweni Municipality into this shocking lapse in safety to establish accountability to prevent further tragedies. The PSA also demands urgent action by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health to enhance hospital security protocols to prevent patients from bringing or accessing smoking materials and strictly enforce no-smoking policies in all hospital wards, with clear consequences for non-compliance. Patient monitoring systems must be improved to detect and prevent high-risk behaviours. Awareness and training for hospital employees on occupational health risks and emergency response procedures must further be strengthened.

Hospitals are places of healing and care, not danger zones. This incident underlines the urgent need for stronger enforcement of hospital safety regulations to protect patients and healthcare workers. Psychiatric and oxygen-equipped wards must be strictly designated as no-smoking zones, with zero tolerance for violations.

The PSA also appeals to the public to refrain from bringing cigarettes, lighters, and other flammable materials into healthcare facilities, as these pose a serious risk to lives, infrastructure, and the safety of such facilities. The PSA remains committed to ensuring safe and secure working environments for healthcare professionals and will continue to engage with relevant authorities to demand improved hospital safety measures, proper enforcement of health regulations, and accountability for failures that put lives at risk.

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