

## Update: Departmental OHS Higher Committee meeting – 19 October 2021

### Progress report: Health and safety issues

The employer reported that the Facilities Management Directorate is finalising the cleaning and hygiene services contracts in Eastern Cape. The Directorate will run a parallel process to secure the required services as they are most affected. For hygiene services, local suppliers will be considered whilst the re-advertisement of the bid is put in place. The employer further reported that Head Office will be requested to re-advertise this on the website and in the interim, information on locally based suppliers was received from two municipalities. Labour noted the work in progress.

### Hygiene equipment: Forestry

It was noted that the tender on the installation of equipment at the Forestry Offices will be re-advertised owing to insufficient responses. Local-based suppliers are to be used in the interim. The employer also reported that the submission for the increase of the budget has been tabled for approval.

### Report: COVID-19 cases statistics

There are 439 confirmed COVID-19 positive cases as of 19 October 2021, with 1 243 employees who were traced as contacts. Provincially in Gauteng there are 185 confirmed cases, prevalent in Environment House and one death, Eastern Cape 69 cases with four deaths. In KZN there are 29 cases with two deaths, whilst Limpopo registered eleven positive cases, and all are recovering. The Western Cape has 126 cases, mostly in Foretrust Building with four deaths. Northern Cape has only two recovering cases, with Mpumalanga reaching eight, and Free State three cases, with all of them recovering. North West has disclosed six cases, with all of them recovering. The statistics are being shared with constituencies on the basis that members are defiant to follow protocols, but the pandemic is not yet over. Members are called to follow the prescribed protocols whenever entering the employer's premises, during tea and lunch breaks, making copies at communal photocopying machines as well as when consulting other Directorates and/or other floors. The number of deaths is alarming.

### DPSA Circular 5 of 2021

Members alleged that managers are inconsistently implementing this DPSA *Circular*. The 75% return to office as contained in the DPSA *Circular* causes congestion, as some managers have instructed employees to be all present every Wednesday. The Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) Directorate

advised that the previous Circulars must be inclusively implemented. Employees are to discuss their routines with supervisors. Furthermore, employees with co-morbidities must submit all necessary medical proof of their ailments in support of requests for approval to work from home. The EHW merely makes recommendation to managers and supervisors, not to granting approvals. The final decision remains with the consultation between the employee and his/her supervisor. An *Ad-Hoc* Higher Committee is being agreed upon on urgent basis to discuss the latest DPSA Circular.

### **Compensation On Injuries And Diseases Act (COIDA) and injury on duty (IOD) cases**

Concerns were raised by members of the Committee on the delayed processing of the reported cases. It relates to cases reported and submitted to the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) Workmen's Compensation Commissioner (WCC) as far back as in 2016. These are still outstanding and without any acknowledgment of receipt. The PSA instantly contacted DEL's Inspectorate Services, who requested that the Department must contact the Chief Inspector with a list of all outstanding cases thus far reported. The Committee agreed to invite the Human Resources Management Directorate (HRMD) for a presentation during the forthcoming meeting for assessment.

### **Vaccination**

Human Capital Management (HCM) updated the Committee on the Departmental vaccination status. Vaccination of all employees who are 60 years and above was assisted through Electronic Vaccination Database System (EVDS). The EHW confirmed that there are still people who are still cynical about vaccination but upon thorough briefing and detailed presentation, the majority had acceded. The 50 to 59 years bracket was the bulk of the Department's employees who was assisted, especially from Branch Forestry Management. The majority of 35 years and above registered themselves and needed less assistance. There is no statistics captured of all those vaccinated, as they are not bound to report.

### **Occupational Health and Safety Policy**

The employer presented a draft policy for consideration. The Committee was advised that such draft policy document must be tabled at a Departmental Bargaining Chamber for consultation. The inputs will thereafter be submitted and be dealt with a Policy Task Team meeting. The employer agreed to follow that process.

### **Occupational Health and Safety Report**

The employer reported that it is reviving and appointing OHS representatives in numerous Directorates and work stations. The finalisation thereof will facilitate submission of reports as there was no compliance by various Offices. Most of the non-conformities was not reported upon. The OHS was requested to ensure that care must be exercised in the appointment of representatives, especially in Nursery and Forestry Branches. It is work in progress.

### **Screening tool**

It was reported that the acquisition of screening tools was extensively deliberated in the Steering Committee meeting on 8 October 2021. It was finalised that a meeting will be set for GITO, EHW and OHS to finalise the attainment of the tools. GITO will pilot the project in Pretoria and Cape Town.

Members will be informed of developments.

*The PSA expresses sincere condolences and speedy recoveries to those members and families impacted by COVID-19.*

GENERAL MANAGER