

Feedback: Special Departmental Bargaining Chamber - 6 July 2021

Occupational health and safety (OHS) compliance and COVID-19 regulations

Members brought to the PSA's attention that the employer fails to comply with basic requirements of COVID-19 prescripts. After consulting the PSA Branch, the Department confirmed there was urgent intervention required with the rapid increase in positive cases. The Department is in disarray because of several employees who are physically reporting to the Office, including uniform personnel. The PSA felt prudent to urgently convene a Special Chamber meeting to alert the Director-General. The employer responded by acknowledging that the Steering Committee has not met for some time. All Chamber parties were forming part of all informal meetings in addressing daily pandemic challenges. Incidences were dealt with as reported. The employer confessed that there is a high number of infections as well as contacts and tracing. It requested labour to make management aware of any non-conformities.

Report from Branches

The Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) Branch reported that it had been at loggerheads from January with managers to adhere to a 50 % capacity in the organisation. Currently it is monitoring adherence to the 30% quota, although some Branches are indicating some resistance. The employer requested labour to assist to monitor and report any defaulting Branches. The reported positive cases in the Department as of 6 January 2021 amounts to 20. A total of 131 employees were in contact with positive employees. These employees were advised to isolate themselves and to report their status. The Chairperson of the Steering Committee pleaded with the employer's chief negotiator for support from management. The intervention and attention of the Director-General are required to address the conduct of managers who are reluctant to acknowledge and implement EHW decisions and plans.

Vaccination plan

The employer reported that it had a plenary briefing session with the DPSA on or about 14 June 2021. It was briefed on the third wave and the series of DPSA Circulars issued on the matter. This included the latest Circular 5 of 2021. No details were provided by the employer, except an indication that the Government Employees Medical Scheme will be assisting with the vaccination process. Presently, all employees between 50 to 59 years are due for registration for vaccination. They will be informed of a follow-up session. As the Department does not have a huge establishment, it is presumed that the vaccination plan will pose no challenge.

Travelling arrangements

As the Department does not have properly constituted Provincial Offices, it relies heavily on travelling in Gauteng and to other provinces in serving clients. Both internal and external travelling were cancelled with immediate effect after the announcement of alert-level 4. The PSA complimented the Department for its immediate cancellation of travelling. It was reported that in some provinces, there are one or two officials who have been deployed for some time now to address service-delivery challenges. This is easing the pressure from communities, who were constantly required to travel to Gauteng Head Office.

Policies

The employer tabled the following policies for consultation:

- Fleet Management Policy
- Parking Policy
- Education Training Development Policy
- Organisational Development Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Employment Equity
- Management of Discipline Policy
- Grievance Management Policy and
- PMDS Policy

It was agreed that a workshop will be convened on 12 July 2021 to deal with these policies. Members will be approached for input on these policies after the workshop. Members will be informed of developments.

The PSA wishes to extend sincere condolences to all members and their families affected by COVID-19.

GENERAL MANAGER