

FOR PSA MEMBERS: LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

25-05-2021

Non- compliance with COVID-19 protocols: Mara Research Station

Members will recall that the COVID-19 pandemic forced government and employers to reconsider their business operations in compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Amongst the interventions, the Department was directed to apply social distancing and to minimize the possibility of the spreading of the virus. Subsequently, the Department issued departmental Circular 19 of 2021, which reinforced the stance of DPSA Circular No 2 of 2021 regarding the maximum percentage of employees to report at the workplace. The departmental Circular was very clear that 100% attendance must be only for staff in the office of the Executive Authority, HOD, all officials performing essential services as well as interns and experiential learners.

The PSA was, however, perturbed by receiving calls from employees at Mara Research Station, complaining about clear disregard of departmental Circular 19 of 2021, which clearly indicates that remote work must continue with employees completing the Remote Work Contractual Agreement. The danger of this reckless behaviour is that should there be positive cases, the Department might be forced to close the entire station as workers will be isolating, which has the potential to negatively affect service delivery. Further, the Station cannot operate outside the policy framework of the Department and the management cannot be allowed to continue discriminating against workers and subjecting them to unfair treatment. This action exposes members to the risk of being infected with the virus while their colleagues at head office and district offices are enjoying the employer's protection.

The PSA subsequently escalated the matter to the Department's head office and the employer indicated that the Circular must be applied throughout the province, unless communicated otherwise. It, however, promised to investigate the matter and revert back to the PSA. Members are advised to regularly check and report OHS non-compliance and other work-related challenges to the PSA at queen.seema@psa.co.za or call (015) 295 0500.

Members will be informed of developments.

GENERAL MANAGER