



FOR PSA MEMBERS: FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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19-02-2025

## Update: Critical OHS issues - Free State Department of Social Development

The PSA is actively working with the Free State Department of Social Development to address several urgent occupational health and safety (OHS) concerns.

### Evacuation training and preparedness

During a recent inspection of Social Development facilities in Qwa-Qwa, it was noted that employees lack adequate training in evacuation procedures. Many are unfamiliar with evacuation plans, the use of fire extinguishers, and the identities of fire marshals. Furthermore, there is uncertainty regarding the presence and functionality of fire alarms. Given the responsibility of caring for vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly, immediate action is necessary to ensure their safety.

### Emergency exits

An inspection of the Thaba Mofutsanyane Secure Care Centre revealed that the front exit lacks emergency exits. Other centres have emergency exits, but several are locked without available keys. This deficiency presents a significant risk during emergencies that must be promptly addressed.

### Water-quality issues

Water-supply problems persist across the Free State. Although institutions have water tanks, these have not been cleaned since installation, rendering the water unsafe for consumption. The *OHS Act* mandates that employers provide clean and drinkable water to their employees. Whilst non-essential staff members are released when clean water is unavailable, essential staff members are sometimes instructed to bring their own water. This situation is unacceptable, and the PSA calls for clear guidelines to ensure all employees have access to safe drinking water.

### Contractor compliance with safety regulations

There have been reports that contractors on site are failing to submit their safety plans to the OHS committees as required. Committee members have faced threats from the DSD management when requesting this documentation. The PSA seeks clear guidelines to address these situations and ensure compliance with safety regulations.

### **Dysfunction in OHS committees**

Although OHS committees are established, reported issues are not being resolved effectively. Some matters require intervention at a provincial level, where there are often delays and inaction. Employees require guidance on how to escalate issues that are not addressed by OHS committees. Additionally, reports of victimisation for escalating concerns are alarming and unacceptable.

The PSA is committed to advocating for the safety and well-being of all employees of the Department of Social Development and will continue to pursue the necessary improvements in these areas. For any enquiries or assistance, please contact the PSA Provincial Office in Bloemfontein on (051) 403 1300 / (051) 403 1315 / [psabloem@psa.co.za](mailto:psabloem@psa.co.za).

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