

**MEDIA BRIEFING ON THE IMPACT OF KZN MEGA-STORM
BY KZN PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE
DURBAN: 10 OCTOBER 2017**

OVERVIEW

In the immediate aftermath of the ferocious storms and floods, the Provincial Government of KZN together with the eThekweni Metro and other affected municipalities is currently mounting a spirited response as part of efforts to alleviate the impact of these violent storms and to bring the lives of the people affected back to normalcy.

We have since the early hours of today been taking stock of yesterday's mega-storm that has wreaked untold damage on our communities and to devise a way forward in our joint efforts as local and provincial government to begin with clean-up operations. Our purpose here today is also to assure the communities that our government is on top of its game in our endeavour to minimise the impact of this storm on our residents and businesses.

Yesterday's storm was quite unprecedented in its ferocity. As many as eight casualties have been reported and many communities have been rendered homeless. Many people's lives have been interrupted by displacement, power outages and severe damage to both public and private infrastructure. In addition, schools and hospitals have experienced serious interruptions to their operations.

The disasters have affected a number of sectors in our province and based on this preliminary report we would like to report the following:

EDUCATION

Most schools were disrupted by yesterday's storms and pupils had to be sent home early. A total of 42 schools were gravely affected and the breakdown per DoE district is as follows: Ugu – 12; Umlazi – 24; King Cetshwayo – 4; Pinetown -1; and

uMgungundlovu 1. Nine of these are high schools and the Department of Education has raised concerns about the upcoming matric examinations in these schools. Plans are underway to ensure that pupils from all affected schools will be able to sit their exams as per the set schedule.

HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

The torrents of rain have also caused enormous damage to healthcare institutions largely in the eThekweni District.

At Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital a wall collapsed fatally wounding two patients in an accident that also saw other two patients incurring serious injuries. Patients in affected areas have been moved. At Addington Hospital, the roof was blown away at the Dental Block which includes Gateway Clinic and Casualty Wards.

At RK Khan Hospital, the Casualty Section and Resuscitation Room were flooded. Patients have been moved into corridors from wards experiencing roof and window leaks. At **Wentworth Hospital**, the MOPD was flooded. Part of the roof of various wards was blown off. At **St Aidans Hospital**, the Administration Block was flooded. At **King Edward Hospital**, the MOPD; OPD; Pharmacy and wards were flooded.

At Clairwood Hospital, the X-ray department had its roof blown off; equipment was damaged and various were flooded. In **Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital**, the drains were flooded.

Other institutions affected include Ekuhlengeni Care Centre whose Administration and Pharmacy sections were flooded. KwaMashu CHC had its door blown off. **Emergency Medical Services** were also not spared; its Wentworth Base; Administration Block and communications Centre were flooded. Trees also collapsed damaging both private and state vehicles.

We thus reiterate the call for people to keep in doors as we deal with this unpredictable and dangerous natural calamity. Indeed, the Emergency Medical Services are doing the best they can and require everybody's support.

DEATHS REPORTED AT THIS STAGE

At this stage we have a total of eight deaths reported that have been confirmed and verified. There are however reports of missing persons and further casualties cannot be ruled out at this stage.

In Nquthu municipality two deaths have been reported, including an eight-year old child who was struck by lightning. Another person – a 46-year old male drowned while crossing a low-lying river.

In eThekweni, the following six casualties have been reported: one municipal employee died in Russell Street when a public toilet collapsed, one SAPS member died in Rottendam Road when a container fell on the vehicle, one child in KwaMakhutha died at Sewula School, two Prince Mshiyeni patients died when a wall collapsed, and one male in Isiphingo died while trapped in the vehicle during flooding.

In addition, many more people have sustained injuries, some of them serious, and all are being treated in various healthcare facilities. We extend our heartfelt condolences as the KZN Provincial Government and municipalities to the bereaved families and we wish all those injured a speedy recovery.

DAMAGE TO INFRASTRUCTURE

The extent of damage to infrastructure includes flooded and blocked roads, 19 collapsed buildings and perimeter walls, blocked storm water drains and sewer lines, flooded buildings and households and power outages as a result of electric cable damage.

Displaced communities have been temporarily accommodated in community halls such as the Montclair Community Hall where they are receiving emergency relief assistance.

As many as 500 power outages were reported in eThekweni yesterday, many of them affecting large areas. Municipal technical staff have been working round the clock to restore power supplies to the affected areas through alternative networks.

Disaster management teams have been working through the night to clear the blocked roads and removing uprooted trees and debris.

QUANTIFICATION OF DAMAGES

At this stage the focus remains on recovery and the provision of relief efforts while assessments of damages are underway. We will only know the figures when these assessments have been completed. Damages are however estimated to run into millions of rand.

APPEAL TO INSURANCE COMPANIES

The KZN Provincial Government hereby appeals to all private sector insurance companies to expedite the processing of claims to ensure that life in our communities and operations in our businesses return to normal as soon as possible.

DISASTER DECLARATION

At this stage, we cannot confirm a formal declaration of disaster as processes are underway to take stock of the damages and once the assessments have been concluded, a comprehensive report will be assessed by the Provincial Executive in terms of its magnitude, impact and cost implications. Thereafter a determination will be made whether to declare a provincial or municipal disaster areas or appeal to the national government to declare a national disaster area in terms of the applicable legislation.

WARNING AGAINST ABUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Unfortunately we have also experienced incidents where some people use social media for all the wrong reasons to disseminate and distribute hoax information. We

strongly condemn such practices as they cause unnecessary panic. Members of the public are therefore urged to desist from distributing unverified information.

PREMIER'S MEETING WITH BEREAVED FAMILIES

Tomorrow, KZN Premier Willies Mchunu will be meeting with the bereaved families in Durban.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

The KZN Provincial Government wishes to thank the province's disaster management teams for their hard work and dedication to the welfare of the affected communities. Our gratitude also extends to various NGOs and individuals for their efforts in providing emergency assistance to those in distress. Our appeal is for these activities to continue.