

Sassa clarifies report on 74,000 deceased ghost accounts

The South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) says it has noted the story aired on the SABC news channel, which stated that over 74,000 deceased recipients were wrongly paid by the agency.



Image source: Ryan Mguel Capili from [Pexels](#)

This was revealed by Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu, in a written reply to a parliamentary question.

The agency said that its fraud and compliance unit is addressing corruption.

“As much as we are aware of some corrupt activities taking place which our fraud and compliance unit is dealing with daily, as Sassa we can confirm that the majority of this is not due to corruption.

“But rather the timing of reporting of death by the responsible family members and the date on which Sassa extracts payments for the affected clients,” the agency explained.

As part of the normal social grant payment extraction process, Sassa said it extracts payment beneficiary details and

compares them with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) monthly.

“The key purpose is to test if the beneficiaries are still alive or deceased. This process takes place just around the 22nd or 23rd of every month.

“In an instance that the client is found to be deceased, such a record is deactivated on the Sassa system before extraction of payment – no money is generated for such clients.

“This interface process with the Department of Home Affairs as explained is automated and it is executed every month without exceptions.”

However, when a client dies at their different residential areas, the only time on which Sassa gets to know if the client has died is when family members report such a death to Sassa or report such to the DHA.

“In instances where death is reported late at Sassa or Department of Home Affairs, such eventuality can result in some payment being prematurely released. There are instances where death is reported after a number of days from the actual date on which death would have occurred.”

According to the statement, the late reporting of death to home affairs or Sassa results in exceptions for monies released prematurely.

“Unfortunately, this element of late reporting of death, neither Sassa nor the Department of Home Affairs has any control over it.”



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Karabo Ledwaba 18 Dec 2023



Review

In addition to these mechanisms, Sassa said it conducts a review of beneficiary personal details to ascertain if the beneficiary circumstances are still the same.

Currently, the agency said a review process is conducted through face-to-face interactions between Sassa staff and the affected beneficiaries.

“If a client is not alive, such a client will not be able to present themselves for a review process.”

According to Sassa, the number of 74,000 deceased beneficiaries as reported in the media, is the number of beneficiaries who were reported to have died in the past three years.

This means that of the 18 million clients paid monthly, there is an average of 2,055 clients that died every month in the past three years whose circumstances could have been one of the few reasons outlined, which are beyond Sassa’s control.

This includes the death reported late to the Department of Home Affairs or Sassa by family members, days after payment has been processed.

“Therefore, this implies that the number of 2,055 clients represents 0.01% of the total population paid by Sassa every month.”

Sassa said its cut-off payment date is the 22nd of every month and that it determines the payment of the deceased depending on the Home Affairs registration.

“Sassa is presently working tirelessly with the Department of Home Affairs to ensure that the systems are connected. This is to ensure that we curb corruption.”

In the past, the agency said it worked closely with the Hawks and other law enforcement agencies to curb corruption.

“We will continue to work with law enforcement agencies for the betterment of our organisation.”

In addition, Sassa said a fraud-prevention strategy aligned with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, has been implemented, while fraud awareness campaigns are conducted regularly to increase awareness.

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