

# Mines potential hotspots in North West province

The North West Health Department has expressed concern about the rapid spread of Covid-19 in the province's mines, as the number of cases rose to 314, as of Wednesday.



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Seventy-four confirmed cases, previously allocated to Gauteng, have since been reallocated to the province after data harmonisation and the verification of addresses, according to the department's spokesperson, Tebogo Lekgethwane,

"[The] majority of these cases are mine-related in Rustenburg," he said.

Mines have become hotspots for coronavirus in the province and the department says it is working around the clock to curb the infections in these communities. "Miners should be screened before they start work and those who come from hotspot provinces like the Western Cape, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape should be screened and tested before they start work," he said.

He urged companies to ensure that mineworkers who test positive for Covid-19 are isolated with their contacts at quarantine sites approved by government. "Mines that were lagging behind in terms of compliance and case management have been ordered to work with district health chief directors to ensure compliance," Lekgethwane added.

The North West Health MEC, Madoda Sambatha, has since been visiting mining houses in the province to assess the level

of compliance with lockdown regulations.

## Hotspot districts

The Bojanala District is the province's epicentre, with the highest cases at 186, with 33 recoveries and one death, followed by Dr Kenneth Kaunda at 99, with 20 recoveries. Meanwhile, Ngaka Modiri Molema now has 19 cases with five recoveries, while Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District has five cases and one reported recovery. Of the total confirmed cases, the majority are linked to mines in Bojanala Platinum, Dr Kenneth Kaunda and Ngaka Modiri Molema.

The province said they have now screened over three-million people.

"This is good progress, considering the total population of North West now stands at just below four-million people.

"Mass screening and contact tracing remain key to prevention of rapid infections and all districts are above 90% contact tracing and all suspected cases are referred for testing," Lekgethwane said, adding that they have tested 2,636 people.

## Treatment protocol, PPE and quarantine facilities

Lekgethwane said a lot was achieved during lockdown level 4 and 5. "Treatment protocols have been developed for a coherent response in the screening, testing and treatment of suspected, as well as confirmed cases."

The province has also increased bed availability through partnerships with the private sector and mining companies.

"We have also ensured the availability of medicines required to treat the complications of Covid-19, analgesic, antipyretics, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, anticoagulants, zinc sulphate and vitamin C," said Lekgethwane.

In addition, hospital capacity has been ramped up by a collaboration between the public and private health, as well as the mining sectors.

"The department will continue to enhance the capacity of hospitals to ensure that services can be rendered should the need arise. We are currently now planning a field hospital for additional beds," said Lekgethwane.

The province is also obtaining the required equipment such as oxygen points and more ventilators. The availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) has been stabilised and measures are in place for continual procurement.

The forensic services and mortuary services capacity has received attention as well.

"To this effect, today [Thursday] the deputy minister is officially opening a forensic pathology mortuary at Brits Hospital in Madibeng. This is part of the province's infrastructure preparedness," Lekgethwane said.

The new forensic pathology mortuary has a body storage capacity of 11 and 40 shelves for decomposed bodies.

"The hospitals have an arrangement with private mortuaries for additional capacity. There is also a provincial standard operating procedure that directs the management of human remains of Covid-19," said Lekgethwane.

The department is also ensuring that frontline workers have PPEs, psychosocial support and vaccination.

"The department has rolled out an extensive training program in the prevention and management of Covid-19 for its employees, as well as the private sector. This continued under level 4, as more information on the disease becomes available and the pandemic evolves," the spokesperson explained.

The North West currently has quarantine facilities and 397 active beds in Bojanala, 126 in Dr Kenneth Kaunda, 137 in Dr

Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti and 81 in Ngaka Modiri Molema.

“We also have adequate quarantine facility beds in the mines, both in Bojanala and Dr Kenneth Kaunda,” said Lekgethwane.

He said the province is prepared for level 3 lockdown.

“Hotspots have been identified across the province and plans for intervention will be implemented.”

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