

Drakenstein municipality waste pickers to resume work at Level 3



File picture: African News Agency (ANA)

By Siphokazi Vuso 13h ago

Cape Town – The Drakenstein Municipality has stuck to its guns that full recycling operations will only start at Level 3.

This was after a campaigner at groundWork, Musa Chamane, said waste pickers were granted essential service status, and that Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma “made it clear for everyone that they are allowed to go back to work”.

Chamane charged that “some municipalities had decided to ignore the Level 4 regulations and some, such as Drakenstein (Wellington) and Msunduzi (Pietermaritzburg), are adamant that waste pickers will only be allowed to go back to work at Level 2 of the lockdown”.

Drakenstein Municipality executive director for engineering services, Marius Wüst, said the municipality would re-commence with its full recycling operation at Level 3, when all recyclers, including informal recyclers, would be able to start operating at full capacity.

Wüst said while Level 4 made provision for recyclers to start operating at 50% capacity, only a portion of recyclable material could be sorted and processed.

“In this regard, the municipality is adhering to the national regulations, and we are not being ‘adamant’, ‘arrogant’ or ‘mismanaged’ in any way.

“The municipality is also stockpiling residents’ bags filled with recyclable material, so that when all recycling operations are fully under way again, our waste entrepreneurs can access them and start sorting and processing the material,” he said.

Wüst also said they had issued each of their 25 waste entrepreneurs, working at the Wellington landfill site and Paarl transfer station, with substantial food hampers that should sustain them for a month.

Chamane said as Level 5 was about to be relaxed, it was not clear about whether waste pickers could return to work or not.

That’s when groundWork, the South African Waste Pickers Association, the African Reclaimers Organisation and Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organisation, wrote a letter to Dlamini Zuma and others, citing the need for waste pickers to be allowed to go back to their work unrestricted.

The SA Waste Pickers Association’s national co-ordinator Simon Mbata said not all municipalities had allowed waste pickers back to work, even those aware of the regulations that allow them to operate.

“Challenges these municipalities have raised are that they are hot spots in terms of the spread of the virus; there is no separation at source; they cannot afford to buy PPE (personal protective equipment) for waste pickers, even if they wished to because they themselves are struggling with waste management and health and safety is a matter of concern,” said Mbata.

Cape Times

<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/drakenstein-municipality-waste-pickers-to-resume-work-at-level-3-47876495>