



Knysna

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Residents have the power to turn the water crisis around

Knysna Executive Mayor, Thando Matika said if Knysna residents work with the Municipality, the water shortages can be alleviated to ensure a constant flow of water. “The situation remains extremely serious across the Greater Knysna area, and despite ongoing intervention efforts, water sources are under severe strain and demand continues to exceed available supply.”

He stressed that river levels throughout the municipal area remain critically low. “The Akkerkloof Storage Dam is currently at approximately 15% capacity, which translates to an estimated ten days of water supply at current consumption levels. While rain has been forecast for Thursday, the rainfall alone will not be sufficient to stabilise the system without a significant and immediate reduction in consumption.”

Matika said in anticipation of possible rainfall, approval has been obtained from the Breede-Olifants Catchment Management Agency (BOCMA) to bag the flanks of the Charlesford Weir. “This intervention will increase catchment and improve pooling, to allow for greater abstraction in case of rain. Work on this project has already commenced.”

The municipality, with its Provincial and National Government partners, has implemented a comprehensive water augmentation programme to increase supply. Matika said specialist teams from government and the private sector have been working around the clock, conducting geohydrological assessments and engineering studies to ensure the plan is both effective and environmentally responsible.

“Several augmentation projects are currently underway and are expected to be operational within the next two weeks. These include the recommissioning of two springs, Bigai and Bongani, and the reconditioning and repair of seven existing boreholes with a combined yield of approximately 3.2 megalitres per day. This is about a quarter of the daily supply needed. In addition, seven new boreholes will be drilled, with an anticipated yield of a further 2.7 megalitres per day. All related supply chain processes have been initiated to avoid delays.”

The municipality is in the process of concluding an agreement with PG Bison, which offers access to additional boreholes with an estimated yield of 3 megalitres per day. Matika said this supply will be split between Sedgfield and a connecting pipeline to Knysna. Another borehole in Sedgfield, already operational, is contributing approximately 0.8 megalitres per day.

“Once fully implemented, the total expected yield from all current augmentation initiatives is approximately 11 megalitres of potable water per day into the system. The total cost of these interventions is estimated at R58 million, underscoring the scale and urgency of the response.”

To address leaks, bursts, and other water losses more efficiently, the municipality is recruiting five additional plumbing teams and three rapid-response teams. “Approximately 8,000 bypassed water meters will be replaced with conventional meters, with procurement already underway. These measures are critical to reducing water losses and unbilled consumption, ensuring that water supplied to the system is not lost through leaks, illegal connections, or faulty meters, and that usage is accurately measured and recovered.” Matika said efforts to minimise water losses are further supported by the local NGO Asivikelani, which is assisting with leak repairs and tap fixing, particularly in the Sedgfield area.

He emphasised that despite these extensive efforts on the supply and infrastructure side, consumption still far exceeds supply. “Without an immediate and sustained change in water-use behaviour, the risk of severe water shedding or a Day Zero scenario remains very real. Human behaviour change is now the single most important factor in turning this crisis around. If residents want to avoid water shedding or queuing at water tanks, we must change our behaviour immediately. Infrastructure alone cannot solve this crisis if consumption remains at current levels.”

“The municipality has also become aware that a growing number of residents are purchasing water storage tanks and are filling the tanks with potable municipal water. While water storage is encouraged as a resilience measure, filling tanks directly from the municipal supply places further strain on an already overstretched system. Residents are strongly urged to connect water tanks to their roof catchment and rainwater harvesting systems instead. Using potable water to fill storage tanks negatively impacts the overall supply for the broader community.”

He reiterated that each household is required to limit consumption to no more than 50 litres per person per day. “For a household of four, this equates to a maximum of 200 litres per day or 6 kilolitres per month.”

“Level 4 water restrictions remain firmly in place and will be strictly enforced. The municipality appeals to all residents, businesses, and institutions to comply fully with these restrictions and to view water saving not as an inconvenience but as a shared responsibility. If we work and stand together by adhering to these conditions and get our consumption down to 50L per person per day, we can protect our town, our livelihoods, and our future.”

Matika said the municipality is deploying every available resource to stabilise the situation. “We are working with our Provincial and National counterparts, engineers, geohydrologists, and environmental specialists to bring additional water into the system as quickly as possible. These interventions are complex and costly, but they are necessary to protect our communities and our economy.”

Mr Graham Pause, Head of the Western Cape Department of Local Government, said the briefing underscored the urgency of collective action. “Government is mobilising every available resource, but behaviour change by residents is the single most powerful intervention right now. Water saved today directly reduces the risk of water shedding tomorrow.”

Ntombizanele Bila-Mupariwa, Western Cape Provincial Head of the National Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), expressed her concern about the escalating water supply challenges affecting Knysna and other coastal towns in the Garden Route District. “The Department is working closely with the Western Cape Provincial Government, Knysna Municipality, and other municipalities are Water Services Authorities and must safeguard water security and mitigate the impact of the crisis on residents, businesses, and the tourism sector.”

“Given the severity of the crisis, DWS, through its regulatory and water resource management functions, has directed the Municipality to urgently explore and activate alternative water sources. These include groundwater abstraction, borehole development, reuse technologies, and temporary augmentation schemes. Working with BOCMA, the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and the Knysna Municipality, DWS will implement a Compliance and Enforcement Blitz to assess adherence to water-use authorisations, imposed restrictions, and environmental regulations. This intervention is intended to prevent illegal abstraction, wastage, and non-compliance that could further compromise available supply.”

Knysna Municipality will share additional information and regular updates on the Municipality’s official Facebook page at /knysnamunicipality, WhatsApp Channel (Knysna Municipality), Collaborator Citizen App, and website www.knysna.gov.za

Report leaks, faulty meters or burst pipes to 044 302 6331 / 6334 or report water abuse to 060 998 7000.

ENDS

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