



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

Minister Mokonyane lifts Gauteng water restrictions with immediate effect

26 February 2017

The Minister of Water and Sanitation, Nomvula Mokonyane, today announced the lifting of water restrictions in Gauteng with immediate effect. She made the announcement following the sharp rise in dam levels as a result of torrential rains recently. The Vaal Dam which supplies the province with water is 97,8% full and it is expected to reach its capacity by Tuesday.

The announcement comes in the wake of a dramatic change in the water situation following torrential rains that have saturated most parts of the country in the past 10 days. In the past week officials of the Department of Water and Sanitation have been monitoring dam levels around the clock to control water flow. Communities who live downstream Bloemhof and the Vaal dams have been warned to relocate as they may be exposed to possible floods.

Speaking at a media briefing at Vaal Dam Mokonyane said officials of her department yesterday released volumes of surplus water at Bloemhof Dam in North West that was filled to its brim at the beginning of the week by the heavy downpours that fell in most parts of South Africa in the past ten days.

“I must thank the people of Gauteng for their efforts in helping us save water by adhering to the restrictions and for using water wisely and responsibly in the last three to four months. I trust that the lessons learnt on responsible water use will become a norm and a way of life for us all and that we will adapt to the realities of being a water-scarce country,” Mokonyane said

She said looking at where the country comes from a few months ago, when the dams averaged a lowly 54,8% in April 2016, 49,1% in December and 60,5% on February 20, a great deal had been achieved.

The department monitors 211 dams; of these 13 are below 10%, with 33 between 10% - 40%. Of South Africa's dams, 57 are above 100% The status of the different systems around the country is available on the department's website.

However, the decision to relax the ban in Gauteng did not mean an automatic country-wide moratorium on water restrictions as some regions are still reeling from the effects of a debilitating drought that started in South Africa two years ago. For instance, stringent restrictions would remain in place in Western Cape which is experiencing the worst drought conditions in its history. The City of Cape Town has introduced Level 3B water restrictions to try and cope with the severe water shortages. However, the restrictions in the province may be reviewed later when winter rains begin to fall in the region.

Mokonyane said water restrictions in other provinces would remain in place and would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis together with the affected municipalities and if need be, they too will be advised to lift the ban.



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The lifting of restrictions will bring relief to many water users, especially the farmers, who have been at the receiving end of the stranglehold of the stringent restrictions because of insufficient water in the past 12 months. The good rains have filled all the dams in North West except Molatedi and Groot Marico dams where tributary rivers are swelling and are expected to fill the two days soon. Wet conditions continue in KwaZulu-Natal where most dam levels are reported to be rising fast and some of them are expected to reach their capacity in a matter of days.

Mokonyane, however, warned that the rains did not mean an end to the country's water woes and urged all South Africans to continue to use water wisely.

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Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

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