



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

South Africans will not be flooded this festive season

30 October 2018

South Africans should not be worried about being flooded this festive season as the country expects below normal rains in the next three months. No floods are expected in Western Cape and parts of Eastern Cape because they are winter rain regions. Hydrologists believe that the weak El Nino is the cause of the forecasted poor rains.

Sporadic flash floods though, cannot be ruled out in the next three months in rainfall regions that are vulnerable to thunderstorms. However, the country will definitely not experience drought during the period under review.

This was the view of hydrologists from the Department of Water and Sanitation who met in Pretoria recently to discuss their state of preparedness for floods during the rainy season. They meet annually during this time of the year to review the department's readiness for natural disasters such as floods and droughts. People who live on the banks of rivers are usually exposed to the dangers of flash floods in most parts of the country.

Two weeks ago flash floods caused some damage when persistent showers fell over parts of the City of Tshwane, sparking fears that two men might have drowned in Apies River. A concerted search for the men yielded no results and the emergency services called off the search.

In July this year heavy rains caused in most parts of the low-lying Western Cape peninsula in the Cape Flats to be flooded, leaving hundreds of shack dwellers with the headache of mopping excessive water that partly destroyed their structures. However, no casualties were reported by the emergency services.

Causes of floods

Each time there are more rains than the drainage system can take, there can be floods. Sometimes, there is heavy rain for a very short period that result in floods. In other times, there may be light rain for many days and weeks and can also result in floods.

Rivers can overflow their banks to cause flooding. This happens when there is more water upstream than usual, and as it flows downstream to the adjacent low-lying areas (also called a floodplain), there is a burst and water gets into the land

Sea water can be carried by massive winds and hurricanes onto dry coastal lands and cause flooding. Sometimes this is made worse if the winds carry rains themselves. Sometimes water from the sea resulting from a tsunami can flow inland to cause damage.

Dams are man-made blocks mounted to hold water flowing down from a highland. The power in the water is used to turn propellers to generate electricity. Sometimes, too much water held up in the dam can cause it to break and overflow the area. Excess water can also be intentionally released from the dam to prevent it from breaking and that can also cause floods.



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