



MEDIA STATEMENT

Department of Water and Sanitation appeals for vigilance on water use during Easter weekend

16 April 2019

As the Easter Holidays are fast approaching, the Department of Water and Sanitation would like to appeal to South Africans, particularly to religious leaders, to be cautious and adhere to water safety measures to avoid any possible drowning incidents that may occur.

During this period, tens of thousands of people are expected to visit coastal areas to enjoy themselves at the country's beaches while people of different faiths are expected to be engaged in various religious activities such as baptism. Subsequently, these religious activities often lead to loss of lives of many due to drownings while also facing danger of reptiles living in water.

In the past year, the rising number of drownings of children in dams, canals and rivers prompted the department to intensify its Water Safety campaign in an effort to educate about the dangers associated with activities near water resources.

As people will be going to their various holiday destinations and visiting our dams across the country, the department would like to advise parents in particular to keep their children in check to avoid drownings. Adults are also warned not to consume alcohol substances near dams as they are likely to end up drowning.

A systematic review of drowning in South Africa conducted by experts at the University of Cape Town, Cape Peninsula University of Technology and Lifesaving South Africa aimed to identify gaps in the knowledge base and priority intervention areas, found that the fatal drowning burden in South Africa was at approximately three per 100 000 people, but was increasing as a proportion of all non-natural deaths.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) concluded that drowning was the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death globally, with an estimated mortality rate of 7.4 per 100 000 population. The drowning mortality rate for the African region was considerably higher at 13.1 per 100 000 population and in 2012 was found to account for 20% of drowning globally.

Drowning is defined as the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid and can have one of three outcomes - no morbidity, morbidity or mortality.

End

Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

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