



Office of the Premier

North West Provincial Government
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE NORTH WEST PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT'S STATE OF READINESS TO COMBAT AND MANAGE COVID-19

Wednesday, 18 March 2020

Ladies and gentlemen of the media,

Dumelang.

It is now common knowledge that President Cyril Ramaphosa and national Cabinet have declared COVID-19; which is commonly referred to as the CoronaVirus, a national disaster.

As a result, we are called upon as the North West Provincial Government to activate our Provincial Disaster Management Centre and roll out a Provincial Disaster Management plan; so as to manage and combat the spread of COVID-19 across the Province.

As of this morning, the Minister of Health had confirmed 116 cases of COVID-19 in five provinces, compared to the 65 confirmed cases last night and as this is a developing story, the numbers are bound to change due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the last 48 hours.

We are therefore aware of the fact that the first reported case in the country was on March 05 this year and by this past Sunday, there were 61 confirmed cases; and today in the morning, the country was standing at 116.

This is reason enough that we need to strengthen our efforts as a Province to make sure that we are ready for any eventuality.

It is for that reason that the Provincial Executive Council resolved, in yesterday's special sitting, to do the following:

- To establish the Provincial Disaster Management Command Centre, which is made up of all the MEC's and is chaired by the Premier; the EXCO effectively took the form of a Command Centre to deal with all matters related to COVID-19 in the Province
- To establish the Provincial Disaster Management Advisory Forum, consisting of all Heads of Departments in the Province as well as the Section 100 Administrators, non governmental organisations and the South African National Defence Force
- Following the various presentations by Departments to the Provincial Disaster Management Command Centre (EXCO), the Provincial Disaster Management Centre is finalising the Provincial Disaster Management Plan for COVID-19, which will be signed off and submitted to the National Disaster Management Centre tomorrow, Thursday, 19 March 2020
- The Provincial Disaster Management Plan will be complemented by a Provincial Disaster Management Budget that we are also consolidating; as there clear budget implications related to the combatting and managing of COVID-19
- The Provincial Department of Health should develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) in line with the President's Pronouncements as well as the DPSA Circular issued across Government on Monday, 16 March 2020; especially regarding gatherings with a greater number of people but not exceeding 100 at a time

- To convene an urgent North West Premier's Coordinating Council (NWPC) on Friday, 20 March 2020 in Mahikeng to allow that forum to discuss how to combat and manage COVID-19 in the Province
- The NWPC is made up of all MEC's, Heads of Provincial Government Departments, Chairpersons and CEO's of the 9 Provincial State Owned Entities as well as all the 22 Mayors and Municipal Managers of our Municipalities
- All the people who will be attending the NWPC will be screened upon arrival for any symptoms of COVID-19 and the meeting will be attended by less than 100 people

We have also put measures in place in case of an outbreak in the Province and the Chief Director Health Programmes has been assigned to lead the provincial outbreak response team and consists of the following:

- Hospital Services, Port Health, National Health Laboratory Services, Emergency Medical and Rescue Services, Epidemiology, Health Promotions, Notifiable Medical Conditions, Environmental Health, Quality Assurance and District Health Services amongst the specialist services on offer

All districts have now been trained on guidelines for case-finding, diagnosis, management and public health response in South Africa and about 820 health care providers have been trained in the North West.

We also conducted a workshop in the private sector, including in the mines, on Tuesday, 10th of March 2020 in the Bojanala Platinum District and we are continuing with private sector training on COVID-19 throughout the province.

The training is focusing on:

- microbiology, epidemiology and clinical presentation,
- surveillance for imported cases including case definitions
- laboratory diagnosis
- infection prevention and hospital readiness
- contact tracing
- patient flow and actions required at each step
- co-ordinating a public health response

Furthermore, all health facilities in the province and ports of entry are screening points and all district and regional hospitals have established holding units.

The Klerksdorp-Tshepong Hospital Complex is our designated treatment center and a 40 bed isolation ward for treatment has been prepared at that hospital.

The Klerksdorp-Tshepong hospital Complex has also formed a management committee specifically for the management of COVID-19; led by the CEO and Clinical Manager.

Six (6) individuals in the North West had been admitted at holding facilities and tested for COVID-19 by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and all the 6 tests were reported to be negative.

We have developed an intensified community awareness programme targeting communities, churches, traditional health practitioners, tribal authorities; material has been developed and is in circulation, wherein we have developed 24 900 pamphlets in English and further 12 000 in Setswana that are being distributed as from today.

Our health officials have also stepped up their presence at the four remaining land ports of entry that are operational, following the closure of the five of the nine ports we share with the Republic of Botswana.

We have assessed these ports for readiness and strengthened capacity there by appointing seven additional environmental health officers to the five that had been provided by the Department of Health.

The five land ports that have been closed are Bray, Mokopong, Makgobistad, Derdepoort and Swartkopfontein.

The closure of the five ports enables further capacity improvement of those four others that are still open and operational.

We would therefore be taking cue from the President, encourage citizens of the Province to take precautionary measures to combat this virus by:

- Maintaining social contact and distancing of not less than 1 metre
- Ensuring that they do not hold gatherings of more than 100 persons at a time and keep the numbers to a minimum
- Noting that smaller gatherings are subject to organisers complying with strict stringent measures of prevention and control
- Taking into consideration that visits to correctional services are suspended
- Reducing on travel and non essential international travel

We are also considering the possibilities of having the following, as the count in confirmed cases continues to rise;

- Additional facilities for quarantine,

- Additional COVID-19 holding and treatment facilities,
- Additional dedicated transport for the exposed and persons under investigation,
- Additional personnel for enhanced surveillance and clinical care,
- Additional resources for protective supplies including sanitizers, tissues and clean water, and;
- Additional resources for pharmaceuticals and surgical supplies.

It is therefore important that everyone supports the measures put in place by Government as there is an urgent need to reduce and avoid person to person contact.

The Health and Safety of all employees remains a responsibility of all Government Departments, Municipalities and the private sector.

Therefore, the North West Provincial Government has decided to put in place measures to curb the spread of this pandemic.

These include but are not limited to:

- suspension of all government events until National State of Disaster is lifted
- suspension of all training/ conferences/ big external meetings with immediate effect until National State of Disaster is lifted
- encourage small meetings to ensure that the number of people attending are as low as possible
- suspension of gym facilities inclusive of sporting activities

We have resolved that staff returning from traveling overseas should self-quarantine/ self-isolate for 14 days upon return and the incubation period is 1 to 14 days; with an average of 5 days because a person can infect someone up to two days prior to showing symptoms.

We have already deactivate Biometric Systems in offices and where we have not deactivated as yet, we are continuously disinfecting.

The deactivated entrances are to be managed by MISS officials; opening those doors in the morning and closing them after knock off time.

We have put in place a whole lot of measures that we will continue to communicate regularly but please note that only the Minister of Health will be providing information on confirmed COVID-19 cases and not the Provincial Government.

Our comprehensive Provincial Disaster Management Plan will contain all the measures regarding government employees, facilities and members of the public accessing government facilities as well as our responses to any eventuality.

Prevention against the further spread of COVID-19 is essentially a public health issue, and by implication can benefit from strengthened health education and communication.

The spread of “fake news” not only undermines the efforts to prevent and manage the spread but is also causing undue panic as well as uncertainty amongst citizens.

We therefore call on all responsible citizens to desist from spreading fake news and statistics as this does not assist our efforts to combat and manage the spread of COVID-19.

Finally, we wish to advise all of you to regularly wash your hands with soap or alternatively, use alcohol based sanitizers and wipes at all times.

I thank you.

Ends

Issued by:

Office of the Premier

North West Provincial Government

Inquiries:

Vuyisile Ngesi

Spokesperson

061 056 3623

vngesi@nwpg.gov.za