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Department:
Public Works, Roads and Transport
North West Provincial Government
Republic of South Africa

Modiri Molema Road
Old Parliament Complex
Mmabatho, 2735
Private Bag X 2080, Mmabatho, 2735
Republic of South Africa
Tel.: +27 (18) 387 2447
Fax: 086 535 1538
Website: www.nwpg.gov.za/public_works

North West Public Works withdraws from Mahikeng streets 500 EPWP beneficiaries because of strike by municipal workers.

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A 500-member work force of young beneficiaries in a successful job creation initiative driven by North West Public Works, Roads and Transport has been withdrawn from all outdoor posts in Mafikeng in fear of the strike action by municipal workers.

Spokesperson of the department, Matshube Mfoloe, said the decision to withdraw all beneficiaries from the streets of the provincial capital was a "precautionary" step.

"No one can say with certainty how the strike action would pan out in the next hour or a few days from now. We therefore have to be very proactive and cautious, rather than expose our beneficiaries to situations which are not of their own making," he said.

Mfoloe said the department has not received reports from beneficiaries with regards to concerns about their safety during the protest march.

"We do not have to wait for such before we spring into action," he said and confirmed scepticism by several beneficiaries to be seen working or wearing their protective clothing during the strike action.

"We will deploy all 500 of them to work in reasonably safe environments away from the streets until the situation returns. These youngsters were darlings to many residents in Mahikeng for the tremendous work they did when the city was like a trash can for several months early this year," said Mfoloe.

He said the role played by "The Orange Brigade" in cleaning the city when protestors march on the same streets, could trigger a confusing message and expose some to unwarranted confrontation.

"The beneficiaries are neither employees nor salary earners but must be seen in the context our initiative as a department to create jobs so that other people can also put bread on the table for the first time in their lives," said Mfoloe.

Dubbed "the Orange Brigade" because of the bright orange colour of their protective gear, the army of unemployed youth from villages in and around Mahikeng, are contracted by the department for a year.

They work for three days, clearing several hotspots and streets infested with refuse and garbage. They earn a stipend of R65 a day.

Launched on May 06, the programme, made visible impact, drawing the applause from the community and commended by the deputy Minister of Public Works, Henrietta Bogopane-Zulu during her two-day visit to the province.