

PRESS SUMMARY:

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

AS the province of KwaZulu-Natal faces the risk of some form of disaster year-on-year, the provincial government through the department of Cogta has come up with innovative new ways to try and prevent the risk of disasters even before they happen.

Fire detection alarms

To address fire problems in some of our informal settlements, all our municipalities will be expected to pilot the installation of fire detecting alarms in some of the informal settlements that are prone to fire incidents, especially as we approach the winter season. Most fires occur at night so these alarms will make warning sounds to wake people up for safety.

A single centre of command to deal with fires

The department is in the process of establishing a unit that deals with fire coordination in the province in line with the Fire Services Act. In order to rescue entrapped victims and perform fire suppression more efficiently, fire services in places as geographically diverse as the United States and Singapore, are becoming increasingly coordinated under one command centre. The revised organisational structure has made provision for this new function and recruitment of qualified personnel will be underway in 2017/2018.

Disaster by-laws on lightning conductors

In view of the ever increasing lightning incidents, we are now issuing a directive that in every municipality, a by-law be passed compelling each and every public facility (school, church, community hall) to have a lightning conductor installed. In China, such

by-laws have existed for decades as part of the country's mandatory standards that deal with protection of human health, personal property and safety. Chinese local government regulations on compulsory lightning conductors have reduced casualties and damage to property dramatically since they were first introduced.

In our own context, this should also include that every public gathering must have as a standard requirement lightning conductor certificates in the same manner that a marquee will have an engineer-issued certificate. In all new public building developments it should become compulsory to have lightning conductors during construction. Cogta will lead the initiative to help municipalities pass such by-laws. Owners and users of the public facilities and events must be responsible for compliance with the proposed by-laws.

The province and the country in general face increasing levels of disaster risk. It is exposed to a wide range of weather hazards which include drought, cyclones, lightning strikes, flooding, mini-tsunamis, and severe storms that can trigger widespread hardship and devastation. Our approach to these developments is that most of our resources must be directed to the introduction of preventive strategies aimed at saving lives and protecting assets before they are lost. We continue to provide grants to municipalities for the establishment and enhancement of their Disaster Management Centres to deal with disasters. The Provincial Disaster Management Centre has supported the building of the uMkhanyakude, Ilembe, Harry Gwala, Ugu, uKhahlamba and Umlalazi Disaster Management Centres. uThukela, uMzinyathi and Amajuba are currently being constructed with the help of Cogta. In addition, the construction of a fully equipped Provincial Disaster Management Centre at Mkhondeni is now complete and its equipping is now underway.

ENDS