

MEDIA STATEMENT BY MEC FOR HEALTH DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA FOLLOWING THE POSITIVE TEST RESULTS FOR 13 MINE WORKERS AT MORULA PLATINUM MINE

Saturday, the 16th May 2020

Good afternoon

Last night we received the results confirming that 13 mine workers at Marula Platinum Mine in Burgersfort have tested Positive for COVID-19. This is by far the single biggest number of positives within 24 hours. We have also recorded two new cases from Lephalale bringing the total number of positives to 76 in the province. To date, our number of active cases stands at 36 with 37 recoveries and 3 deaths. These number of positives comes from 9690 tests conducted in the province of which 5121 comes from public facilities and 4569 from private laboratories.

The MEC and the HOD have held several virtual meetings with the mine managers of the same mine between last night and recently to establish the facts and also to come up with solutions to this challenge. A response team from the department of health has been on site since last night with the mine staff to assist with the isolation and also the tracing of contacts.

Of course we did anticipate that the relaxing of lockdown rules in order to open some economic activities will bring many challenges in so far as increases in the number of positives is concerned. It is for this reason that immediately after the announcement of opening of mines, we made a clarion call to mine bosses to take extreme precautionary measures to prevent the spread. Key among our recommendations was that upon return to work, workers must be screened, those who meet the criteria be tested and also quarantine all of them for at least 14 days before they can go underground. This was guided by our understanding that the mining environment is fragile and susceptible to transmissions. This is a point that we want to emphatically repeat.

Following the president's announcement to relax the regulations, the Marula Platinum Mine was proactive by inviting all its 3300 employees through sms and emails to report for duty. 2700 employees who are residents of this province responded between 17th and 20th of April where they were screened and those who met the criteria for testing were tested and none of them tested positive.

A further 130 employees only reported for screening on the 4th of May and when they asked where have they been they did not gave clear answers. That's when the mine subjected all of them to a compulsory testing and those are the test which gave us 13 of those positive.

We are happy that the Government and Ministry Task Team will have a virtual meeting with the mine bosses. Through this meeting, we believe be clear way forward on how governments and mines will work together to protect the lives of the workers.

We call upon our community members to continue respecting the laws of lockdown and also taking precautionary measures. Remember to wash your hands with soap, wear a mask when you go into the public spaces and onserve social distancing.

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