

All Gauteng state hospitals and clinics fail safety audit – News24 29 August 2019

Not a single state health facility in Gauteng has been assessed as complying with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), according to a statement DA Gauteng health spokesperson Jack Bloom issued on Thursday.

"This bombshell information is revealed by Gauteng Health MEC Bandile Masuku in a written reply to my questions in the Gauteng legislature," Bloom said.

"According to Masuku, 'all facilities audited received either a non-compliance finding, such as a contravention and/or improvement compliance notice and fire contravention.'"

The following facilities were the most non-compliant:

- Bheki Mlangeni Hospital
- Far East Rand Hospital
- Tembisa Hospital
- Kopanong
- Mamelodi
- George Mukhari
- Ekurhuleni district clinics
- Johannesburg district clinics

According to Bloom, Bheki Mlangeni Hospital was built only five years ago, but faces a host of serious safety risks that include the following:

- Psychiatric patients escaping through fire escape doors who are a risk to themselves and others;
- Chained exit doors, a risk to patients and employees in case of a fire or emergency;
- Roof leaks on rainy days;
- The air conditioning settings are extremely hot in summer and extremely cold in winter due to a design problem, which also leads to the cancellation of operations;
- An overcrowded accident and emergency section, leading to cross infection;
- The records section is overflowing with patient files, fire escape doors are blocked and the existing fire alarm systems are not functioning properly.

Other hospitals at high risk include the following:

- Tembisa Hospital - non-compliance in the stores and main kitchen and faulty pressure equipment;
- Far East Rand Hospital - not compliant due to the unavailability of emergency exit routes and a fire detection system in most parts of the hospital;
- Mamelodi Hospital - a dysfunctional ventilation system in the accident and emergency unit;
- Kopanong Hospital - employees at risk of being trapped inside the freezer, leaking roofs, peeling walls, plugs in wards not SABS-compliant, redundant fire hydrants, storm water and sewer pipes frequently blocking.

"These are alarmingly high safety risks and worse, we only know the risks in those facilities that have been audited, whereas most of them have not."

Bloom said he was dismayed that occupational safety has been so neglected at Gauteng hospitals and clinics, endangering staff and patients.

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"We were lucky that no lives were lost when there was a fire at the Bheki Mlangeni hospital earlier this year, but safety measures need to be stepped up at all hospitals.

"It highlights once again how grossly unprepared the provincial health department is for the planned National Health Insurance (NHI) which requires properly accredited high-quality health facilities," Bloom said.

Gauteng health department spokesperson Kwara Kekana could not be reached for comment.

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