



The impact of loadshedding in the provision of health care services to communities

**Virtual Ministerial Briefing
21 February 2023**



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MANDATE

- Local Government has a constitutional responsibility to provide municipal health which include ensuring food control, safe disposal of the dead, environmental pollution control and surveillance and control of communicable diseases amongst other services.
- Some of the municipalities in particular metropolitan municipalities are rendering primary health care services on behalf of Provinces.
- The provision of both Primary Health Care and Municipal Health Services to communities has negatively been impacted by loadshedding.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES

- Some of the municipal clinics do not have back-up power supply system in the form of generators or uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) and therefore get affected by loadshedding.
- Even those which have backup generators do get affected as they were not designed to provide back-up electricity for a longer period of time.
- These has led to services interruptions where patients have to on different days wait for electricity to return for them to receive services. Often health workers resort to work in dark spaces just to make sure to patients are assisted.
- Loadshedding also impact on medicine storage as back-up generators sometimes run out of diesel, leaving fridges without power compromising the efficacy of the medication in the pharmacies as well as consulting rooms.
- At times water is linked to power supply which means that if that both health workers and patients cannot access ablution facilities when there is no power.
- The impact goes beyond the provision of services as impact on the finances of the municipalities due to the costs of diesel to run generators.

MUNICIPAL HEALTH SERVICES

- The demand for municipal health services particularly on services relating to ensuring food safety and safe disposal of the dead has increased as a result of loadshedding
- The already overstretched environmental health practitioners in municipalities are struggling to cope with the demand for monitoring of food premises and funeral undertaker premises
- When load shedding occurs, frozen foods run the risk of defrosting and food items that need to be stored in refrigerators warm up.
- Smaller retail stores that do not have back-up generators suffer from greater food spoilage after power cuts.
- A similar situation occurs with restaurants and bakeries that are not equipped with power back-up systems. The same impact is experienced in many household with no backup generators.
- Consumers run the risk of consuming spoiled food as Environmental Health Practitioners cannot be everywhere to ensure that spoiled food is disposed of.

MUNICIPAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Municipalities through their Environmental Health Practitioners are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring safe disposal of the dead.
- Some mortuaries and funeral undertaker premises including those with backup generators are battling keep bodies from decaying as they can no longer ensure the preservation of human remains at the right temperatures in cold storage facilities.
- As with the monitoring of food premises, Environmental Health Practitioners are battling to cope with the demand of ensuring safe disposal of the dead over and above other services they are required to provide.

ARTICLES IN THE MEDIA SPACE ILLUSTRATING THE PROBLEM

- <https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/entrepreneurs/funeral-parlours-battle-to-keep-bodies-from-decaying-due-to-load-shedding-5c9a2232-cef9-4eec-940e-114b912ec242>
- <https://www.news24.com/drum/news/local/mortuaries-playing-musical-chairs-with-decomposing-bodies-as-loadshedding-leaves-them-in-the-dark-20220923>
- <https://www.gardenroute.gov.za/2022/09/26/an-environmental-health-practitioner-ehp-explains-our-role-in-the-disposal-of-the-dead/>
- <https://health-e.org.za/2023/02/09/strained-energy-grid-strains-healthcare-workers/>
- <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/load-shedding-only-88-of-western-cape-175-clinics-have-back-up-power-minister-says-a67b6766-f3af-42cd-a25e-27a52931f17b>
- <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/as-load-shedding-bites-public-clinics-feel-the-squeeze-20230129>
- <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/no-electricity-at-lillian-ngoyi-community-health-care-centre-5a03ba62-3787-4f9c-9bd0-4e9772f0d45e>
- <https://www.averda.com/rsa/news/load-shedding-increases-food-waste>



RECOMMENDATIONS

SALGA recommend that:

- All health establishment providing health services to the people be exempted from loadshedding to mitigate the current impact of loadshedding on the effective functioning of health facilities to save lives.
- Government must Fastrack efforts aimed at ending loadshedding as it does not only impact on safe and healthy environment but also impact on social and economic development at local level.



Thank You



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