
Media Statement

For immediate release

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SALGA calls for climate-resilient infrastructure and strengthening of the disaster management function as the country mourns over KZN disaster

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has noted with sadness and a sense of grief the magnitude and severity of the impact of the severe weather conditions which occurred in 10 districts (uMkhanyakude, uThukela, uMzinyathi, Umgungundlovu, Zululand, ILembe, Harry Gwala, King Cetshwayo, uGu and Amajuba and eThekweni metro in KwaZulu Natal province that has resulted in the loss of life, livelihoods and damage to property, infrastructure and the environment as a result of heavy precipitation, flooding, strong winds, and landslides.

SALGA further welcomes the decision in terms of section 23 (1)(b) of the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 to classify and declare the occurrences as a provincial state of disaster.

Councilor Bheke Stofile, SALGA President said: “We call for all sector departments and municipalities including the private sector and civil society to work closely to offer assistance to the affected and vulnerable communities who are in desperate need of care and support during this time. This is crucial because the scale of this disaster requires more multisectoral interventions”.

While disasters cannot always be prevented, global warming and associated climate change are projected to cause severe weather patterns that will become a regular occurrence in this country. This should marshal all levels of government and partners to act decisively in averting the devastating impacts of climate change.

Councilor Stofile reiterates the importance of climate-resilient infrastructure and planning and identifying environmentally sensitive areas that need to be protected and preserved. This will be crucial in ensuring that communities are not settled in these ecosystems that would often result in loss of life and livelihoods due to floods, mudslides and other forms of environmental degradation.

The destruction of the KZN road infrastructure also serves as a wake-up call for us to rethink how we plan and build our roads. . It is becoming clear that the storms are no longer just a problem of low-lying areas close to the rivers, stormwater drainage systems, wetlands and rivers can no longer handle heavy downpours.



It is important that municipalities be supported to improve the disaster risk management function and focus heavily on risk reduction and prevention efforts. In 2021, SALGA conducted a study to determine the ability of municipalities – across all municipal categories to perform functions in relation to disaster risk management and fire services, reflecting on, but not limited to the effectiveness of the institutional arrangements; systems and procedures, ability to respond and the adequacy of funding arrangements and sources of funding. This was a “deep-dive” analysis through a sample across all municipal categories, in order to arrive at an understanding of the challenges and the complexity of the provision of Fire Services and Disaster Risk Management in local government. In this study, SALGA, in consultation with member municipalities, provides a rationale for the elevation of these services in municipal structures; and argues for increased allocation of resources to the local government sphere for the effective performance of the function.

SALGA continues to actively participate in the Intergovernmental Committee on Disaster Management (ICDM) which has been established in terms of Section 4 of the Disaster Management Act, 57 of 2002 (DMA) to give effect to the principles of the cooperative government in Chapter 3 of the Constitution on issues relating to disaster management and is accountable to and must report to Cabinet on the coordination of disaster management among the three spheres of government.

SALGA wishes to convey condolences to the families who have lost loved ones in the flooding.

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