

Preparedness for Disaster Management and Emergencies

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South Africa faces an ever-increasing level of disaster risk. The country is exposed to a wide range of adverse weather patterns, which include famine, tempests and severe flooding that can initiate widespread destitution and destruction. In addition, South Africa's general coastline and immediacy to shipping routes present a number of marine and coastal threats. Similarly, the shared boundaries with six southern African neighbouring countries present both ordinary and human-induced cross-country risks, and benevolent assistance obligations during emergency and disaster situations.

In addition to these natural and human-induced threats and despite ongoing progress to extend essential services to the needy urban and far-flung communities, the country has huge numbers of people who live in conditions of serious propensity to disasters in underserved, environmentally fragile or peripheral areas where they are faced with the possibility of recurrent natural and other threats that range from drought to repeated informal settlement fires. (South African Government, 2005)

State of Disaster due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

In 2020 the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma declared a state of disaster in the country after considering the magnitude and severity of the COVID -19 outbreak. At that time Covid-19 had been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The state of disaster is designated under Section 3 of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002 (Government, 2020)). This declaration empowered government with the ability to take measures in preventing more people from becoming severely ill and preventing loss of lives.

Although the pandemic has not ended 750 days after the country been placed in the state of disaster, the president of Mr Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa on 04 April 2022 lifted the state of disaster with certain limitations. This was to allow growth of the economy and for jobs to be created in order to allow the country to somehow regain what it had lost during the hard lockdown. Members of the public are still compelled to wear masks in indoor spaces and to sanitise regularly to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

KZN State of disaster due to floods

While the country was anticipating a steady recovery from the covid-19 pandemic, some parts especially in KZN were hit by heavy rainfalls that led to severe flooding. These floods resulted in many people losing their lives and many more going missing.

Survivors and victims told the president and his delegation heart-breaking stories about how children, parents, siblings

and neighbours being swept away as their homes crumbled under the pressure of the flood waters. (Government, 2022). This has led to the province being placed in a state of disaster by the president.

The events that have taken place around the country over the past couple of years have really shown the importance of emergency readiness whether as a country or individually as a citizen as well as in one's personal space. The association sympathises with all members who have suffered loss of any kind during these difficulties.

Preparedness for disasters has also been shown to be an important component for workplaces as much as it is for countries because they also have a direct impact on the day-to-day activities in businesses and eventually affects the recovery post the disaster.

It is also important for businesses to have an emergency plan which should include:

1. Assessing local capacity
2. Planning
3. Capability maintenance
 - Training
 - Rehearsal
4. Disaster risk reduction (Lee, n.d.)

We are certainly wish that the country is not plunged into another disaster however are hoping that our members and society are ready in the unfortunate event that it does happen. Our thoughts are with everyone who has to deal with the results of all the events.

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