

MEDIA RELEASE:  
31 March 2015

## **KZN Department of Health is determined to resolve EMS labour issue**

Following the failure to report for duty by some members of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) today (31 March 2015), the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health would like to reiterate that services provided by EMS are prescribed as Essential Services. Therefore, EMS personnel are NOT allowed to participate in strike action or demonstration protests during their working hours. If they do participate, it will constitute an act of misconduct and they WILL be subjected to disciplinary action, and the principle of "No Work, No Pay" will apply.

### Background

The department would also like to take this opportunity to provide background information on the issue of Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD), as well as salary Grade Progression. The South African Government introduced Occupation Specific Dispensation as a staff retention strategy, in an attempt to arrest a flight of skills.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the OSD for Professional Nurses, Staff Nurses and Nursing Assistants was implemented on 01 July 2007. This was followed by the implementation of OSD for Medical Officers, Pharmacists and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff members on 01 July 2009.

The manner in which OSD was implemented for EMS employees was no different from other categories within the Department. And as such, EMS personnel were translated from levels to grades. Provision was also made for employees who were translated to OSD to be considered for salary Grade Progression. This would be subject to SATISFACTORY work performance assessment.

OSD for EMS personnel, Medical Officers and Pharmacists was implemented correctly, in line with the directive from the Department of Public Service and Administration, which provided specific translation keys to be used.

However, some EMS employees are currently dissatisfied with their OSD on the basis that it did not meet their expectations in terms of salary increases.

When such concerns were raised by EMS employees, the Department conducted an audit in all 11 EMS District Offices and found that 303 EMS employees qualified for salary Grade Progression.

The financial implication for the implementation of the salary Grade Progression for the 303 employees is R14,9 million. Payments will be made to the employees in due course. The Department would like to apologise to the employees for the delay in effecting the payments.

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health