

# Vryheid Community urged to be cautious following diarrhoea outbreak

27 March 2019

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health is urging residents of Vryheid and surrounding areas to use only water that has been disinfected for drinking. This follows the admission of scores of people to Vryheid Hospital who were suffering from diarrhoea earlier this week. According to management of the Zululand Health District, 54 patients were treated between 22 – 24 March 2019. The patients were from Bhhekuzulu, Lakeside and Vryheid town.

The Abaqulusi District Municipality has been placed under administration following certain irregularities, including failure to guarantee the provision of water that is safe for human consumption.

On 26 March 2019, a further six patients were admitted to hospital with diarrhoea, including two from Sasko and another two from the Dumbe-Bilanyoni area. While Environmental Health Practitioners have begun taking samples of water in the affected areas and elsewhere, the Province's Communicable Diseases Control has also taken stool samples from patients in order to determine the exact cause of their illness.

Following a meeting of emergency response teams on Sunday, another high-level meeting is due to take place tomorrow (28 March 2019) at Abaqulusi District Municipality between representatives from the municipality's water affairs, National Health Laboratory Services, municipality water affairs, as well as a multi-disciplinary health team.

The KZN Department of Co-Operative Government and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) has sent a team of engineers and infrastructure specialists to have a closer look at the situation.

While the hospital's kitchen is supplying boiled water for drinking for in-patients, the local health district has begun loud-hailing and handing out flyers on the safe use of water.

The Department wishes to urge the community of Vryheid and surrounding areas not to panic, but rather adhere to the following water and food safety protocols:

- Use only bottled water, or water that has been disinfected with 1 teaspoon or 5ml of bleach into 20 – 25 litres of water, mix well and wait for at least 30 minutes before consumption.
- Then boil the water at least for a minute (let it bubble) to make it clean and safe.
- Wash all raw food with clean, treated or boiled water
- Wash your hands before handling or eating food
- Wash food utensils in clean, treated or boiled water
- Protect food from fly contamination and prevent fly contamination at home
- Use proper toilet facilities only and wash hands after use.
- Do not allow children to play in dirty pools, rivulets or storm water outlets
- Do not contaminate rivers or leave sewage where it can be washed into a river by rain.