

**Delmas tap water**  
**Media release by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry**  
**20 November 2007**

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has confirmed that results from tests conducted on water samples taken from Delmas have proven negative for microbiological contamination. Indicator organisms were tested for as prescribed by the South African National Standard (SANS 241:2006) and the results proved negative for the presence of any diarrhoea-causing contaminants. These analyses were performed by at least 5 different laboratories. Based on the results presented, **the Delmas tap water can be declared safe for human consumption**

The Department's Drinking Water Quality Regulation unit, joined forces with the University of Johannesburg in conducting the Delmas investigation following the outbreak of diarrhoea late last month (October 2007). A number of analytical tests were conducted to determine whether the water that is currently being reticulated is safe, as well as to establish whether a link exists between the increase in cases of diarrhoea and drinking water.

During the investigation it was established that the resource water in one of the 3 borehole fields (the A-field borehole) during late September proved to be contaminated and could have been the trigger for the initial increase in the number of cases of diarrhoea. Chlorination was required to deactivate contaminants before being reticulated and consumed, which was immediately done and this process is continuing with support from my Department. However, despite these measures and the notice to the Delmas community to boil their water an unusually high number of cases of diarrhoea have continued to be reported.

What this points to is there are other factors causing the diarrhoea, and a joint action team has been established to investigate what the other causes could be as they clearly go beyond water quality. Tests have been done on food products and we are awaiting the results.

Arising from the 2005 outbreak of diarrhoea and the recommendations made, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is continuing with its support of the Delmas Municipality to improve the water quality and ensure that the water is safe to drink.

These support measure include:

1. Connection of the C field directly to the Delmas Reservoir (at a cost of R1.5 million)
2. Approved the business plans for the construction of a Water Purification Plant.
3. Support for the Section 78 assessment at a cost of R200 000.
4. Development of a Ground Water Management Plan at a cost of R212 000.
5. More recently we have been assisting in the payments (of R500 000) for the service provider (ERWAT) who are providing support in the management of the sewage works and developing the necessary municipal bi-laws.
6. Today we have confirmed that we will be providing a further R750 000 towards a team of engineers that will be starting on Monday. These engineers will be ensuring that there is strong management over the water quality and sanitation in the area, and will bring additional expertise to the Municipality.
7. Items that are not costed include the extensive support that the experts from my department have been providing, including the sampling and testing, as well as, assisting with the investigations of the causes of the diarrhoea. We have six staff members deployed to this area as well as the resource of the Institute for Water Quality Studies unit.
8. The costs of the study by the University of Johannesburg to gather intelligence on a range of factors that could be linked to the causes of the diarrhoea, will be borne by my Department at a cost of R120 000.

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