

Media statement

To: all media

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Issued by: The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry

Tap water in South Africa safe to drink

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry would like to re-assure South Africans that the country's tap water is safe to drink.

The Department acknowledges that the water might at times not meet the required technical standard, according to our management systems (electronic Water Quality Management & Drinking Water Quality Regulation). However we must clarify that this in no way means the water in these towns is not safe for human consumption.

Drinking water quality management is the responsibility of municipalities; and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, has an oversight and regulatory role on the quality of tap water. We have implemented a country-wide system to assist with the overall management of drinking water quality.

On average 3000 samples are taken nationwide from water supply systems, and the latest results indicate that on average 94% of the analyses complied with the health aspects of the national standard for drinking water quality.

Our monthly reporting indicates that 98% of all samples taken comply with the Health aspects as listed in of SANS 241: 2006.

The Department has already commenced with its incentive-based regulation programme, the Blue Drop Certification Programme, with the objective of awarding excellent drinking water quality management in different towns.

A secondary objective is also to allow the general public to be adequately and responsibly informed on the regulator's confidence levels in drinking water quality management levels per service system (town/city). First assessments in all 9 provinces were completed and final audits and assessments have commenced to inform the inaugural public report in May 2009.

In conclusion, the department wants to reiterate its commitment to ensuring that all South Africans are served with the highest quality drinking water. Our national standard compares well with the World Health Organisation's limits

(which have been adopted as standards for the European Union and other developed countries, including UK, Canada and Australia).

In spite of the many challenges we have to face it is encouraging to note that we do have water service systems which record similar compliance levels as the counterparts in developed countries.

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