



Soccer fans assured of 'safe' water during World Cup

Soccer fans due for South African shores to share in the international spectacle that is the Soccer World Cup can be sure that the tap water from the host cities are safe.

This is according to Water & Environmental Affairs Minister Buyelwa Sonjica. Releasing the *2010 Host Cities Drinking Water Quality Management Audit Report* in March, Sonjica said the world could rest assured that tap water in all host cities was safe to drink. All of the host cities scored 95% and have been awarded Blue Drop status under the Department of Water's (DWA's) incentive-based regulation system.

Johannesburg (98,39%) and Cape Town (98,18%) received the highest scores. Apart from water quality, host cities were also judged on, among others, water safety plans, submission of credible information, asset management and incident management.

Over the last six months, the country's overall drinking water quality measured 96%, an improvement over the 2009

Blue Drop Report when the country's towns and municipalities scored on average 93,3%. According to Sonjica, South Africa still had safe tap water, relevant to other countries. "You go to other countries and at the hotels there is a sign that says 'don't drink from the taps'. We have never had that," she said, adding that the country had few outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

However, this did not mean that the country should be complacent as water quality was continually threatened by population growth, dilapidated municipal infrastructure and pollution. Sonjica said the DWA issued directives against those municipalities where the supply of water had become unsafe. These directives would be followed up by 'strict monitoring' of the municipalities in question, but the department would also offer assistance to those towns that needed to improve their water standards.

To check out the Blue Drop status of your town Visit: www.dwa.gov.za/bluedrop.

Affordable housing to be beefed up

Government plans to upgrade 500 000 shacks in informal settlements by 2014.

This is according to Minister of Social Development Edna Molewa. About 1,2 million are living in informal settlements in South Africa.

Government's new plan is to upgrade 125 000 informal settlement units annually over the next four years through the National Upgrading Support Programme. According to Molewa this is an attempt to step up the delivery of affordable housing for all.

At the same time, government aims to boost the number of rental housing units by offering more housing finance and by setting aside 6 000 ha of land situated near city centres for affordable housing. "The reality is that many of the communities in informal settlements have been there for longer than the period that is stipulated in the laws. There is also the requirement that we need to integrate our people as much as we can into the cities."

Source: *BuaNews*

New report showcases best practices in asset management

The integrity of water and wastewater infrastructure is increasingly at risk as a result of the failure to invest in the maintenance of these assets.

The severity of this situation is now being taken seriously in many countries, including South Africa, where billions of Rand is required to maintain infrastructure over the next few years. This is according to a new report, *Compendium of Best Practices in Water Infrastructure Asset Management* commissioned by the Global Water Research Coalition.

Water Research Commission Director: Water Use and Waste Management, Jay Bhagwan, who spearheaded the compilation of the report says that recognising asset management as a fruitful area of research is relatively new. "Asset management covers a broad area and has roots in many disciplines. Recognition of the importance of the application of good science and innovation to this area is increasing, which is why it was deemed necessary to capture the novel and creative applications, techniques and

processes that are emerging."

The report highlights examples in different countries of strategic initiatives at the highest level, from the development of policy and legislation towards ensuring that asset management becomes a legal requirement for all water services providers to innovative techniques for infrastructure risk assessment. Decision-making techniques for capital investments; studies on the implementation of asset management in utility practice and the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and information technology is also covered in the publication.

"This tapestry of best practice from around the globe demonstrates the giant strides the sector is taking in ensuring that the good principles of strategic asset management are implemented, applied and built on," notes Bhagwan.

To download the publication, Visit: www.wrc.org.za/SiteCollectionDocuments/News%20documents/2009-02-23%20GWRC%20final-Jay.pdf

New CT sewage pump station nears completion

The new R32-million Kuyasa sewerage pumping station and inlet works, currently under construction in south-east Khayelitsha, is set to greatly reduce sewage problems experienced in the area.

"Construction is on track, with the bulk of the concrete works already 95% complete and the electrical and mechanical installations underway," said Mayoral Committee Member for Utility Services Alderman Clive Justus. Final completion is scheduled for the end of June, 2010.

The existing Monwabisi pumping station, which the Kuyasa pump station is set to replace, has suffered several chronic problems over the years. In the event of an overflow, the sewage spills onto the dune area behind the pump station and causes pollution on the dunes and, occasionally, the beach areas. In addition, the poor performance of the existing inlet screens causes

frequent blockages and a subsequent breakdown of pumps.

The new pump station is situated at the end of the sewer catchment area in Khayelitsha. About 11 500 erven will contribute sewage to the station. The pump station has a total pumping capacity of 400 l/s and sewage will be pumped via a new 600-m-diameter rising main into a gravity sewer that connects to the Zandvliet Wastewater Treatment Works.

Foreign objects are the most common cause of blockages in sewers and Justus hoped the community would work with the municipality to eliminate this problem. "It is deeply distressing to see what is sometimes placed in sewers and the physical and environmental damage that this causes. I hope that the new pump station will provide the impetus for the community to be more careful with what they put into the sewers."

Billions required to improve bulk water infrastructure

A total of R2,1-billion has been budgeted for the next five years to make South African dams safer.

According to the Department of Water Affairs' latest *Strategic Plan (2010-2013)* a recent assessment of the country's national water resources infrastructure has shown a backlog of R10-billion in dam maintenance. To ensure operational efficiency of the supply of bulk water this backlog needs to be addressed urgently.

To this end, the Dam Safety Rehabilitation Programme, which started in 2005, will continue and planned rehabilitation works will be completed at 25 dams. A similar programme to rehabilitate water conveyance infrastructure has also been started.

The department also plans to complete seven new water augmentation projects to support sustained economic growth and meet growing social water needs. These include the Lesotho

Highlands Water Project Phase 2 and the raising of Clanwilliam and Hazelmere dams. Prefeasibility studies to dam South Africa's largest free-flowing river, the Mzimvubu, is set to start in 2012.

Surveys done jointly with local government have also established huge backlogs in the rehabilitation and refurbishment of regional bulk water and sanitation infrastructure owned by municipalities. The department has now embarked on a programme to address these backlogs.

To pay for these rehabilitation and refurbishment programmes the public might have to pay much more for water in future. "A revision of the current water pricing strategy is required to improve the financial viability of government bulk raw water business," the department said. According to the DWA, appropriate pricing of water is necessary to ensure that this scarce resource is valued by all citizens.

Citizens urged to take care of their rivers

The departments of water and environmental affairs, together with the Water Research Commission (WRC) successfully hosted an event at the Eerste River, in Stellenbosch, to raise awareness about the plight of South African rivers. The event was also used to launch the government's Adopt-a-River campaign.

Pollution of South Africa's rivers remain one of the country's greatest challenges and very few of the country's rivers remain untouched by pollution from industrial, mining, domestic and/or agricultural sources.

The Eerste River, which is fed by the Kuils and Plankenberg rivers, is affected by sewage and stormwater runoff from surrounding informal settlements, industries and agricultural practices along its banks. The event, which took place during National Water Week, included a walk to the river,

and demonstrations of the miniSASS (South African scoring system), which is used to determine the environmental health of a river.

The aim of the new Adopt-a-River campaign is to create awareness among South Africans about the importance of caring for our scarce water resources and to encourage citizens to actively participate in their protection and management, reports WRC Research Manager Bonani Madikizela. Interest in the programme was sparked by a Parliamentary question whether the country's rivers were healthy and fit for use. Some members of Parliament then volunteered to 'adopt' a river as a sign of their own commitment in protecting the health of the country's rivers.

Following the event at Eerste River, Winelands District Municipality Executive Mayor Nompumelelo

Two cycling for water research



Two young motorcycling enthusiasts have criss-crossed southern Africa to raise awareness about South Africa's water research.

Altus Jacobs and Cobus Botes set off from Johannesburg, travelling through Botswana, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. This Wheels for Water, as the adventure has been dubbed, aims to create awareness about the state of water in southern Africa while promoting the NEPAD Water Centres of Excellence Initiative.

This initiative was launched last year to expand and strengthen water

research capacity at various universities in the region. It is supported by the Department of Science & Technology, the European Commission, the Water Research Commission and coordinated by Stellenbosch University.

As part of the awareness campaign, the two motorcyclists visited Centres of Excellence at the Universities of Botswana, Malawi and Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique. They also shared basic water treatment technology in local communities, and collected entries for a drawing competition from schools in Zambia and Maputo.



Hani vowed to adopt the Eerste River and set an example for neighbouring municipalities. "If the councillors do not keep their promises they can be

taken to court," said Deputy Minister of Water & Environmental Affairs Rejoice Mabudhaphasi, who participated in the event.