



BEACH WATER QUALITY MONITORING AND PUBLIC NOTIFICATION COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

JANUARY 2026





INTRODUCTION

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On **18 December 2025**, the High Court issued a judgment directing the municipality to implement measures aimed at protecting public health and ensuring transparency regarding water quality at public swimming beaches. An application for leave to appeal has been delivered. However pending the appeal and without any prejudice to its rights, the eThekweni Municipality has decided to implement this communications protocol, in the interest of public safety, which aligns with the concerns entertained by the Municipality.

Henceforth the Municipality will undertake:

- **Weekly publication of E.Coli readings** for all swimming beaches under the Municipality's jurisdiction. It should be noted that the National Water Guidelines, impose a reporting guideline of once every fortnight. Notwithstanding same, the current protocol shall provide for weekly E. Coli readings and reporting. This interim protocol is subject to reassessment in due course.
- **Adoption of a communication protocol** for notifying affected beach and river communities and industries about water-related hazards.
- **Effective public notification** on how to access this information.



OBJECTIVES

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- The objectives are addressed in a manner that is measurable and achievable with regard to resources availability and time constraints.
- Provide **timely, accurate, and accessible information** to the public.
- Build **trust and transparency** through proactive communication.
- Enhance **public awareness for access to water quality results, the causes of sewer overflows and the pollution, including reporting mechanism.**
- Updates and **profiling of the on-going sanitation infrastructure maintenance, repairs and refurbishment.**



SITUATION ANALYSIS

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KEY ISSUES

The issues which are identified hereunder will be addressed in greater detail in the Municipality's Action Plan.

- Ageing infrastructure: **upgrade and refurbishment in progress where funding is available.**
- Infrastructure mechanical and electrical breakdown: **Vandalism remains a challenge, some of the facilities have 24 hours security personell to mitigate the challenge.**
- Disposing of foreign objects into the sewer infrastructure results in blockage and overflows: **There is a need for heightened educational awareness.**
- Businesses disposing of fats that clog sewer drains: **Enforcement in progress**



TARGET AUDIENCE

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- **General Public** (beachgoers, communities and industries near beaches and rivers)
- **Tourism and Hospitality Industry**
- **Environmental and Community Organisations**
- **Media**
- **Municipal Departments and Officials**
- **Ratepayers' Associations**



KEY MESSAGES

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Alert messages:

- Updates on the beach water quality results.
- Information about the status of bathing beaches when open or closed for use.
- Alerts will be issued for **any water-related hazards**.

Education and public awareness messages:

- How to access beach water quality results
- Encourage the public to safeguard Municipal infrastructure and report misuse and vandalism
- The municipality is committed to ensure **public health and safety**.
- **Theft, vandalism, and improper waste disposal result in sewer blockages and overflows.**
- **Don't dispose foreign objects such as hardened fats, rags, disposable nappies, and other non-biodegradable materials** that cause sewer blockages.



AUTHORISED MESSENGERS

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Communication is a shared responsibility between the Director: Marketing and Communications Directorate and the Director: Sanitation Services Directorate.

Responsible for media interviews including radio, print, press releases and media briefings. To provide regular updates on beach water quality, status of beaches, ongoing projects to repair and upgrade infrastructure.

- **Director : Marketing and Communications Directorate**

Responsible for media interviews: Radio, Television, Print and Press Briefings.

To provide updates on beach water quality, status of beaches and ongoing projects to repair and upgrade infrastructure.

- **Director : Sanitation Services Directorate**

Responsible for media interviews and engagement with communities and stakeholders. Provide updates on projects, infrastructure repairs, maintenance, operational and budget issues.



AUTHORISED MESSENGERS

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- **Executive Director: Trading Services**

Responsible for media interviews and engagement with communities and stakeholders. Provide updates on projects, infrastructure repairs, maintenance, operational and budget issues.

- **City Manager**

Responsible for media interviews and engagement with communities and stakeholders where required. Provide updates on projects and budget issues.

- **eThekweni Municipality Mayor**

Media interviews on political issues, respond to political commentary, build public confidence and status of progressive sanitation projects. Engagement with communities, media and stakeholders where required.

- **Trading Services Committee Chairperson**

Media interviews on certain sanitation issues and Committee reports on sanitation projects.



AUTHORISED MESSENGERS

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- **Sanitation subject experts from EWS**

Community, media and stakeholder engagements when required.

- **Community Liaison Officers and Education officers**

To conduct educational awareness with communities, schools and stakeholders on sanitation issues, including communicating beach water quality results.



COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

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- ❑ **Radio, TV and Digital Channels:** Beach water quality results and educational awareness communication. Beach water quality to be published when the results become available while awareness will be present on various platforms on daily/weekly.
- ❑ **Community and Stakeholder engagements by Community Liaison and Education Officers:** Educational Awareness on sanitation challenges such as the pollution and the status of water quality.
- **Bulk Email and WhatsApp Alerts to Councillors:** Alert messages to be disseminated as and when the beach water quality results become available.
- **Loud Hailing by Municipal Community Participation and Action Support Directorate (CPAS)-** To alert communities of health hazards and mobilise communities to attend meetings.



COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

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- **Municipal Website** - Dedicated Water Quality Page (already in place on www.durban.gov.za).
- **Social Media Platforms** (Facebook, X, Instagram).
- **Public Notice Boards** at all swimming beaches to be updated weekly by PRC.
- **Local Radio stations and Newspapers** (How to access beach water quality results and major announcements such as beach closures).
- **Press Releases and Media Briefings** (Major announcement such as beach closures and issue water contamination alerts).



ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE

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Action	Responsible	Deadline
Develop and approve communication protocol	Media Relations & Sanitation Directorate	In progress
Create dedicated webpage for E.Coli readings	IT & Marketing and Communications	Done
Design social media templates and notice board posters	Communications	Done
Weekly publication of E.Coli readings of bathing beaches	Scientific Services & Marketing and Communications Environmental Dept	On going
Issue press release announcing compliance	Media Relations	As and when there is a beach closure
Public Notice Boards and Signage on all bathing beaches	PRC Directorate	On going
Pamphlets distribution	EWS Education Officers and CLOs	
Develop database of communities and industries near beaches and rivers	Sanitation Directorate	EWS TBC



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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EWS

- Attend to sewer network repairs & update Marketing and Communications Directorate, PRC Directorate & critical stakeholders.
- Weekly water quality testing. Testing and verification of result is undertaken by an internal, accredited laboratory.
- Sharing of water quality results with Marketing and Communications Directorate, Recreation & Parks Directorate as well as critical stakeholders, immediately.
- Sanitation and the pollution tracing team to proactively share regular updates with Marketing and Communications Directorate.



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES CONT..

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- EWS Community Services Branch to initiate and set up regular meetings with affected communities, stakeholders and schools.
- Sanitation Directorate to share accurate database with Marketing & Communications Directorate, PRC Directorate and critical stakeholders.
- Compliance workshops with businesses who cause pollution, this is to be done by EWS.



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES CONT..

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PRC DIRECTORATE

- Regular monitoring and update of beach water quality on all notice boards and signage daily.
- Update Marketing and Communications Directorate of decisions to close and open affected beaches.



15. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES CONT...

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MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS	ACTIVITY	Timeline
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop and upload water quality results content.▪ Publish E.Coli results	Weekly
Media Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop media statements on water quality results & share with media.▪ Facilitate media interviews.▪ Communicate sewer infrastructure	Incident based



16.ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS	ACTIVITY	Timeline
Social Media Platforms	Design water quality results posters. Publicise E.Coli readings and communicate closed and open beaches.	Proactively Weekly
Comms & PR	Implement informative public education campaign via modern media platforms. Update on Waste Water Treatment Works licenses, upgrades, maintenance and	Proactively



COMMS PROTOCOL

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EWS to develop and submit plans to mitigate sanitation challenges.

EWS to share internal communication systems on dealing with reported sewer overflows, blockages, maintenance and repairs.

EWS to share stakeholder engagements plan including database of affected communities.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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- Track **website traffic** and **social media engagement** daily and report back to EWS every month. This enables the Municipality to assess the public engagement with its communications portals so as to identify and resolve any concerns.
- Monitor media coverage through daily Media Monitoring Reports.
- Monthly compliance report to **Executive/Senior Management**.



ENDS

BY 2030 ETHEKEWINI WILL BE AFRICA'S MOST LIVEABLE CITY