

Load shedding creates water crises in Caledon



The town of Caledon have been faced with a water crisis for the past two weeks. SUPPLIED

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RESIDENTS of Caledon are buckling under the pressure of power cuts and water shortages exacerbated by load shedding as the municipality's main water supplier battles to hire generators to alleviate the problem.

The sound of sirens going off in the morning and evening signal the arrival of water trucks. The sound has become a norm for Caledon's residents, in the Overberg district.

The town's municipality, Theewaterskloof, receives its bulk water from the Overberg Water Board. But load shedding has severely impacted operations which has led to low pressure and, at times, no water for days on end.

The municipality and water board have purchased a few generators to help with water pumping and have also made an exemption application to Eskom. But residents, teachers and small business owners are calling for an immediate remedy.

“People complain about planning your life around load shedding. Now imagine you also have to plan around water shedding,” said resident Brian Erasmus.

“There are some days when there is water, but other days when you sit without water for two to three days (in a row).

“Never did I picture myself standing with bottles or empty water cans just to do an essential thing like take a bath. Water in our taps has now become a luxury,” said Erasmus.

Chairperson of the Caledon informal traders association, Stephen Wildschut, said businesses were suffering because of the sporadic water supply.



Residents say they are tired of having to deal with both load shedding and the water crisis. SUPPLIED

“This is a major financial loss for small businesses and the community as a whole.

“Put yourself in a visitor's shoes: if he or she must come here on holiday and hear there is no water, do you think they will stay or even recommend our town?”

Local teacher and chairperson of the Educators and Workers Allied Union of South Africa (EUSA), Andre de Bruyn, said it was unacceptable that water shortages disrupted schools.

“Due to the constant power cuts, the water provision to schools in some areas have become sporadic ... (this) poses health risk at schools due to a lack of drinking and water to flush the toilets.

“One can just imagine 1 000 kids with no water in the toilets or taps.” De Bruyn said their union wanted schools to be exempted from water and power cuts.

“Learning cannot take place, especially practical subjects, without electricity supply. (The exemption) is non-negotiable to EUSA.”

Spokesperson for the Western Cape Education Department, Bronagh Hammond, said four of the five schools in Caledon were affected by the water problem.

“We have been informed that load shedding is impacting the municipalities pump systems. The situation has affected schools for the past two weeks,” she said.

Hammond said water from tanks have been used to supply water in toilets, while learners, who are attending lessons during the school holiday, were provided with bottled water for drinking.

Overberg Water Board's technical manager, Thabo Kabini, said they had applied to Eskom for load shedding exemption.



Two generators has been delivered in Caledon past week. SUPPLIED

“The request seeks a load shedding relief or exemption for all Overberg Water Board’s schemes and pump stations. Manual pumping is done when off load shedding with the of building up more storage capacity to be used during load shedding periods,” said Kabini.

“Where applicable, the restriction of reservoir outlets is done during the night (10pm to 5am). The intention is to (build) up more storage capacity to be used during load shedding periods.”

In the meantime, the water board said it scouring the country to hire generators while awaiting the delivery of the ones they purchased.

“As much as this process has not yet yielded best results due to unavailability of generators for hiring in the country, Overberg Water Board continues to vigorously scan the market for service providers that have generators at hand regardless of their location in the country,” he added.

Mayor of Theewaterskloof Municipality Karel Papier said two generators arrived in Caledon this week and are being installed to help alleviate the impact load shedding is having on water operations.

“We are urging the public to bear with us. It has been a difficult, complicated process, and we will not stop until we've gotten it right,” he said.

Acting municipal manager Boy Manqoba said the generators would be utilised at four strategic points to ensure that water is continuously being purified at municipal resources, including two bore holes.

“We will also be exploring the possibility of cleaning our reservoirs to remove sludge causing water discolouration in certain areas in and around Caledon.

“With the assistance of the Department of Local Government and the Department of Water and Sanitation, we are in talks with Eskom to exempt our water supply sites from load shedding so that Overberg Water and the municipality can fill up the reservoirs and other storage facilities.”

Written by Tracy-Lynn Ruiters