

# We're winning water loss war

**MACK MAKHATHINI**

ETHEKWINI'S war on water loss is bearing fruit, with the Municipality issuing bills for a record volume of water in January, said Councillor Visvin Reddy, Chairman of the Procurement and Infrastructure Committee.

More good news is that this milestone was achieved at the same time as the Municipality was able to slash the amount of water it buys from bulk supplier, Umgeni Water.

Reddy attributed this double win to a multi-pronged approach by the eThekweni Water and Sanitation (EWS) Unit. This includes the R1.9-billion asbestos cement (AC) pipe replacement project, the pressure-reducing valve initiative and the upgrade of

antiquated water meters.

"Our ageing water system was losing 260 000 kilolitres daily. We asked the Non-Revenue Water branch to embark on a programme to identify and treat the source of the problem," he said.

He said the pipe replacement project was expected to provide at least 50 years of leak-free service.

Pressure management has also proved to be one of the most effective interventions. By reducing water pressure, the Municipality could reduce water loss by 105-million litres a day.

Every R1-million invested in pressure management translates into a R3-million saving on water loss. On average the drop in pressure will be from 580kpa to 420kpa and the

majority of consumers would notice little difference.

Reddy said the Municipality began commissioning pressure-reducing valves throughout the city last March as a means of increasing the lifespan of water mains, decreasing the likelihood of burst pipes and ultimately reducing water loss.

## Savings

"This initiative is expected to ultimately save the Municipality about R115-million a year through reduced levels of leakage," he said.

EWS Head Neil Macleod said the Municipality was ahead of schedule in achieving its target of installing 350 new pressure-reducing valves; commissioning 100 advanced

pressure control devices, and doing repairs and detecting leaks on 1 800km of reticulation and replacing 700km of existing AC pipes this year.

Throughout the city there were 10 604 domestic water meters that were more than 20 years old (with 3 089 older than 30 years) and the Municipality had replaced 8 637 by March, paving the way for better meter reading and billing.

"Improvements to the water losses are already evident, which eThekweni attributes to the persistent efforts to replace the mains, reduce pressure, detect and repair leaks and bursts. This is no quick fix, but the cumulative benefit of the work being done is coming to the fore," said Macleod.

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