



## Public Announcement:

# Umgeni Water continues to treat and supply drinking water during the lockdown period

Umgeni Water wants to reassure its customers that it will continue to provide its core services – supply of drinking water in bulk and treatment of wastewater – during the 21-day lockdown. Therefore, our municipal customers and consumers should have no concerns about reduced water supply or changes in excellent water quality that is distributed from water treatment plants that are operated by Umgeni Water.

### Bulk potable water

Supply and distribution of water is an essential service. Umgeni Water derives its mandate of bulk potable water and sanitation services provision from the Water Services Act 108 of 1997 and the National Water Act 36 of 1998. These are core functions of a Water Services Provider and are, therefore, essential in nature.

Umgeni Water operates and manages 20 water treatments plants: **all of them continue to supply drinking water to our seven (7) municipal customers during the period of the lockdown.** The quantity supplied will remain in accordance with contractual stipulations, while Umgeni Water's quality management programme for drinking water is being enforced without exception. This programme encompasses rigorous monitoring, water quality assessment, systems audit and compliance with South African National Standards 241: 2015 for drinking water quality.

Similarly, ancillary laboratory services continue to be conducted or offered to our customers:

- eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality;
- Msunduzi Local Municipality;
- Ugu District Municipality;
- iLembe District Municipality;
- uMgungundlovu District Municipality;
- Harry Gwala District Municipality, and
- uThukela District Municipality

Adequate preparations have been made to ensure that key staff that are involved in the water treatment and distribution processes will be on duty to ensure that our municipal customers receive adequate water to enable them to supply it to consumers. In preparation for uninterrupted operation of Umgeni Water's infrastructure and conveyance of treated water in bulk, numerous mitigation and preventative measures have been implemented at water treatment plants and dams where operational activities take place.

These mitigation and preventative measures include social distancing in the work place where staff are seated at least two (2) metres apart, issuing of protective gear to staff and restricting of access to all of Umgeni Water's plants, dams and offices by service providers, contractors and consultants.



Access will only be allowed for essential purposes and if Umgeni Water management are satisfied that all Covid 19 prevention protocols have been implemented and full adherence is occurring. In a further effort that is aimed at securing the health of employees, company transport is being provided to operators of our water treatment and wastewater plants who do not have transport. This obviates the need to use public transport. Public transport has been identified as a risk environment for transmission of Covid 19.

Other preventative measures that have been implemented include some categories of staff, specifically those in the financial and administration segments, have been given the option of working away from the office. The organisation has already implemented a policy of self-quarantine and isolation, if circumstances require this.

### **Wastewater treatment:**

Umgeni Water operates, maintains and manages 12 wastewater treatment plants, some of them on behalf of customers. This service is vital for protection of the environment and downstream communities. The process involves treatment of ingress and discharge of it, in its treated form, into the river system. Umgeni Water remains committed to ensuring that wastewater released into rivers is not harmful to the environment, aquatic life and communities that live alongside rivers.

**During the period of the lockdown Umgeni Water continues to operate these wastewater treatment plants and adhere strictly to all wastewater risk abatement plans and implementation of mitigation strategies that ensure wastewater is treated to an acceptable standard.**

Preventative and risk mitigation measures similar to those that are being applied at water treatment plants have also been implemented at wastewater treatment works. These precautions have been taken to try to shield staff from transmission of the disease. Umgeni Water is committed to ensuring that sufficient and safe drinking water is supplied to our customers so that all of us are equipped to slow down the spread of Covid 19.

### **All of us have a role in managing the virus**

The Executive and Management of Umgeni Water also wish to state unequivocally that the initiatives announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa to ensure effectiveness of the lockdown are being fully supported, as Umgeni Water intensifies strategies and programmes to protect the wellbeing of its employees. Like other entities of State, Umgeni Water has a role to play in translating into action the pronouncements made by our President.

In this difficult period, it is our greatest desire that all South Africans unite and adhere strictly to the measures that have been introduced. They are intended to limit external person-to-person contact – which is one of the most effective ways to flatten the curve so that our country's health facilities are not overwhelmed by unmanageable numbers of new infections.

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**Chief Executive: Umgeni Water**

