

MONDAY, 11 APRIL 2022

Torrential rains over the past 72 hours have pushed up the level of Hazelmere Dam, in the north of Durban, to approximately 65%, which poses a risk to the wall extension that is currently under construction.

Umgeni Water, which manages this dam, has now taken a decision to release water from the dam on an emergency basis in order to reduce the level to 53%. The first release will begin on Tuesday, 12 April 2022, and continue until 53% is reached.

Communities residing close to or on the banks of the Umdhloti River are reminded that when water is released, the level of the river rises rapidly. This could pose a risk to the safety of any person who tries to cross the river. It could also pose risk to structures erected on the river's banks.

It is not known how long it will take to reach the required level of 53%. Due to saturation of the ground, the run-off into the dam remains strong as heavy rains continue. In January 2022, the dam reached 63% and it took five days for it to drop to 53% in releases.

The rapid rise in the dam level in the past weekend was the result of heavy rains in the catchments of Hazelmere Dam. The release is necessary to maintain a safe operating level, set at 53% in the interim pending completion of the raising of the wall project.

If the level of the dam is kept at 64%/65%, water will go over the wall that is under construction and it could topple.

The raising of the dam wall project was commissioned by the Department of Water and Sanitation and, after protracted delays caused by construction-related complications, the contractor has returned to site. About 10% of the work remains unfinished and completion is scheduled for end of 2022.

When completed, the raised wall will more than double the storage capacity of the dam, thus reducing risk of water shortages occurring again. The most recent case of water inadequacy in Hazelmere Dam occurred during the protracted drought of 2015-2017.