



Flood Damage in Wushini, Inanda, Accompanying Events and Expression of Compassion by the Board of Umgeni Water

Issued by the Corporate Stakeholder Management Unit Tuesday, 26 April 2022

1. Context

- 1.1. The Board of Umgeni Water is aware of media coverage pertaining to the destruction of a home in Wushini, Inanda, during the severe floods of 11th April 2022-12th April 2022 and reported anger that an Umgeni Water pipe allegedly caused the structure to be razed.
- 1.2. In the aftermath of this tragedy, three children, who are understood to be from the family that resided in that home, are still missing.
- 1.3. The Board of Umgeni Water wishes to state at the outset that its heart goes out to the affected family for the loss of their home and the heartbreak they are having to endure in not knowing the whereabouts of the missing children.
- 1.4. Every member of the Board, Executive and Staff of Umgeni Water shares in their grief and want to provide support to assist the family and others who are affected by this natural disaster to deal with its tragic consequences.
- 1.5. To this effect, arrangements are being made for members of the Board to meet the family where discussions will be held on numerous matters, including assistance in search for the missing children.
- 1.6. There can nothing more distressing than the uncertainty created by not having a roof over one's head and not knowing the whereabouts of missing persons. It is traumatic for loved ones and it is equally heart rendering for everyone at Umgeni Water.
- 1.7. The media has reported in the past 24 hours that the family is angry with Umgeni Water because a pipe Umgeni Water uses to convey raw water allegedly destroyed the family's home. It was also reported that three children referred earlier are missing in the washaway.
- 1.8. Umgeni Water is aware that emotions are running high but the media also have a responsibility to research and report facts in an objective manner so that the public has information that is substantial, irrefutable and reliable.
- 1.9. It is important that the factual position is shared with the public so that misunderstanding, misinterpretation or incorrect perceptions are removed.
- 1.10. Umgeni Water has two pipes in Wushini. Both are underground. They are positioned along the road. Information provided to Umgeni Water shows that in the torrential rains, a rock from the nearby hill rolled down and struck one of the pipes, breaking it.
- 1.11. In the force of water, the pipe careered some distance away. There was a house nearby. The media coverage suggests that the house was struck by a pipe that rolled, destroying it in its impact.
- 1.12. At the time of the flood event and before the rock fall, both the pipes were supplying raw water to Durban Heights Water Treatment Plant.
- 1.13. The entire act of dislodging of the pipe and its impact are subject of an internal investigation.

2. Reaching out to the affected and destitute

- 2.1 Umgeni Water is a caring organisation and responsible corporate citizen. It has close ties and, in some instances, partnerships with communities where its infrastructure is situated and where communities ultimately receive drinking water that is supplied by the organisation.
- 2.2. On Monday, 25 April 2022, members of the Board and Executive visited Inanda where Board members engaged with the local leadership and the community of Wushini.
- 2.3 The purpose of the visit was to show support for the community, work with the leadership and form a sustainable partnership. Importantly, the Board and Umgeni Water as a collective want to assist as the community rebuild their lives.
- 2.4 This engagement took place at the Wushini Arts Centre. It was a formal programme and the Chairperson of the Board addressed the local community and the leadership.
- 2.5 As a show of solidarity with members of the local community who lost all their possessions in the floods, grocery parcels were given to them as temporary relief. Drinking water from a water tanker was also made available on the day. Drinking water is also provided through the network of eThekweni Metro's tankering service, to which Umgeni Water has made a financial contribution. This is an expression of the fact that the Board understands and wants to do something to alleviate the human suffering caused by the trail of destruction left by the floods.

3. Umgeni Water's partnership with the leadership and community of Wushini

- 3.1 Various other initiatives and proposals are under consideration by Umgeni Water to assist the local community. This could herald the beginning of a long and sustainable relationship.
- 3.2 The key priority at this stage is to assist the community with reconstruction and for Umgeni Water to work towards full restoration of water provision.
- 3.3 The local leadership and community are encouraged to make any suggestions they may have on collaboration. An Umgeni Water-community-local leadership forum will be established to take the process forward.