



**environment, forestry
& fisheries**

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2079 {NW2639E}

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Mr M N Paulsen (EFF) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

Given that single-use plastic consumption has increased globally during the coronavirus pandemic (details furnished), what steps are being taken by her Department to stem the impending crisis of much of the plastic waste landing up in our oceans where delicate eco-systems will be affected?

2079. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

The Department has established an emergency COVID-19 online cellular phone-based communication platform to assist Municipalities with COVID-19 matters. The Municipal support team is coordinating all waste-related information, with the support of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). With regard to the management of COVID-19 related waste, all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), e.g. face masks, latex gloves, etc. is managed based on its source. PPE waste generated from isolation units/wards, designated quarantine facilities, ports of entry (land, sea and air), self-isolation/quarantine at homes of suspected COVID-19 cases and/or patients is handled as Health Care Risk Waste (HCRW). There are hazardous waste facilities that are continuously monitored for compliance by the Department in relation to the treatment of HCRW. PPE waste generated from

households, workplaces and public places will be treated as general waste and disposed of at municipal landfill sites.

The Department of Health (DoH) has developed a National Hygiene Strategy and Implementation Plan which includes a component focussing on waste management practices according to source. The document provides public hygiene interventions to control and prevent the spread of the virus. The Strategy includes a section on waste management. This waste management section aims to manage the potential risk posed by waste to the population's health, including healthcare workers. The guideline further proposes appropriate measures to handle the waste depending on the source of infection, and includes waste management in healthcare facilities; designated quarantine facilities; points of entry; residential, public places as well as offices. The Department is part of a team that is led by the DoH to put together Regulations and other strategies for managing COVID-19 related matters. The Department has engaged with the DoH and provided input to a number of documents, including this Strategy, on waste related issues.

The Department ensures that the 4R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover), are used where appropriate and only considers disposal through landfilling as the last option. This is in line with the waste management hierarchy as advocated by the National Environment Management: Waste Act, 2008 (Act No. 59 of 2008) to protect the environment and people from waste-related pollution impacts. The Department has put the regulatory framework in place to prevent pollution and manage pollution sources.

The Department is strengthening the policy framework as follows:

- The introduction of the Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations which have many benefits, one of which would be the reduction of plastic waste into sea. These Regulations and the related Notices will contribute towards increased collection for recycling of, among others, take away food containers and delivery packaging. Take away food containers and delivery packaging are being collected for recycling since level 4 of the lockdown.
- The amendment of the Plastic Bag Regulations to compel the use of recycle as part of the product manufacturing.
- The National Waste Management Strategy has been revised and provides the necessary policy impetus to influence improved circularity of plastic products.

These measures are aimed at significantly decreasing the amount of waste that is disposed through landfilling and/or leaks into the environment.

Furthermore, in 2019 the Department initiated a pilot Source to Sea project aimed at combatting the problem of litter, especially plastic litter, in catchments, rivers and hotspot communities before it reaches the coastal and marine environment. The pilot project is currently being implemented in the Umngeni and Umhlathuzana river catchments within the eThekweni Metro area (Kwazulu-Natal) where five river systems have been targeted for the collection and recovery of land-based litter through the Department's Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programmes (EPIPs). These rivers include the uMngeni, Umlazi, uMbilu, uMhlathuzana and the aManzimnyama rivers. The project also seeks to reduce litter generation at source by encouraging municipalities, the private sector and civil society to step up waste collection efforts, especially in informal settlements that are located along the river systems, where there is a higher risk that mismanaged waste may drain toward the ocean. The project is aptly being implemented under the slogan "A litter free land for a litter free ocean". The Department is currently undertaking consultations to expand the pilot project to the Western Cape province during the 2020 financial year, followed by the Eastern and Northern Cape provinces in 2021.

Regards



MS BD CREECY, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 16/9/2020