
GENERAL NOTICES ALGEMENE KENNISGEWINGS

NOTICE 943 OF 2013

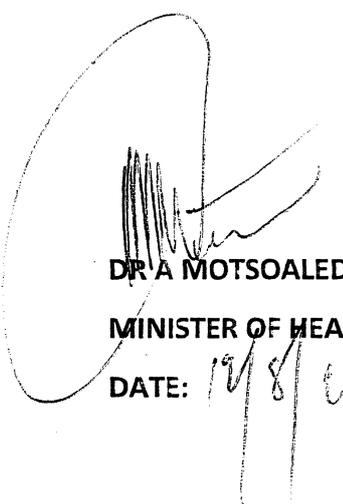
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

NATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN TERMS OF NATIONAL HEALTH ACT, 2003 (ACT NO 61 OF 2003)

The Director-General of the National Department of Health intends to set norms and standards for environmental health, in terms of Chapter 3, Section 2(a)(ii) of the National Health Act, 2003 (Act 61 of 2003).

Interested and affected parties are invited to submit any substantiated comments or representations on the proposed Norms and Standards to the Director-General: Health, Private Bag X 828, Pretoria, 0001 (for the attention of the Director: Environmental Health), within one (1) month from the date of publication of this notice.

The norms and standards document is accessible from the Department of Health's website www.doh.gov.za (link: resource centre-legislation-documents for comments), or by Email: mutavr@health.gov.za, Tel: 012 395 8524/21.



DR A MOTSOLEDI, MP

MINISTER OF HEALTH

DATE: 19/8/2013

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1. Introduction

1.1 Policy context

One of the key strategic issues for the health sector 10 Point Plan is “improving the quality of health services”, and the Strategic Plan for the department 2011/15 reflects the need to strengthen the provision of environmental health services in the country. The shift of focus from prevention to a curative health system has impacted negatively on the health status of the country as people depended on the health system for their wellbeing rather than themselves. Government recognises the importance of prevention across all areas of health care, which are clearly indicated in the White Paper on the Transformation of Health Services, as well as the Primary Health Care *alma-ata*.

The Draft National Policy on Environmental Health Services reflects the Government’s intent as far as rendering Environmental Health Services is concerned. It is subject to the broader National Health Policy, as set out in the White Paper on the Transformation of Health Services in South Africa.

1.2 Legal context

The National Health Act, 61 of 2003 stipulates the broad role of national health to issue and promote adherence to norms and standards on health matters, including environmental conditions that constitute a health hazard. The act further stipulates and provides Environmental Health Practitioners with the powers to enter any premises, except for a private dwelling, at any reasonable time and inspect such premises, in order to ensure compliance with the act. Only a health officer registered as an Environmental Health Practitioner in terms of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974) may conduct environmental health investigations, in terms of section 83 of the National Health Amendment Bill, 2011. The section states that if a health officer has reasonable grounds to believe that any condition exist which –

- a. Constitute a violation to the right contained in section 24(s) of the Constitution;
- b. Constitute pollution detrimental to health;
- c. Is likely to cause a health nuisance; or
- d. Constitutes a health nuisance, the officer must investigate such condition.

EHPs may further issue a compliance notice to any person if a provision in the National Health Act has not been complied with.

The Regulations defining the Scope of the Profession of Environmental Health outlines functions of Environmental Health Practitioners as the Nine Municipal Health functions. In terms of the National Health Act, Municipal Health Services are defined to include the following environmental health functions, which are provided by District and Metropolitan Municipalities:

1. Water quality monitoring;
2. Food control;

3. Waste management;
4. Health surveillance of premises;
5. Surveillance and prevention of communicable diseases, excluding immunizations;
6. Vector control;
7. Environmental pollution control;
8. Disposal of the dead; and
9. Chemical safety.

Provincial Environmental Health Services which are provided directly by the Provincial Departments of Health are:

- a. Malaria Control; and
- b. Control of Hazardous Substances.

The National Health Amendment Bill amended the general functions of the national department of health to include the facilitation and promotion of Port health service, which was assigned as a provincial health function in terms of the NHA 2003. This function will become a national competency, due to the fact that it is an international service which is governed by the International Health Regulations, of which South Africa is a signatory. Therefore the service is best managed at national government level.

2. Purpose of the Norms and Standards

The norms and standards for environmental health will assist in setting a benchmark of quality against which delivery of environmental health services can be monitored.

The main purpose of the norms and standards is to provide a national approach in ensuring standardization of functions and activities in the delivery of environmental health services and establish a level against which environmental health service delivery can be assessed and gaps identified.

This environmental health norms and standards will be aligned to the norms and standards for health establishments as published by the Office of the Health Standards Compliance.

3. Background and structure of the Norms and Standards

These National Norms and Standards reflect the South African policy context and are based to a large extent on existing legislation, policies, guidelines, protocols related to environmental health, including those for which custodianship lies with other government departments such as the Department of Environmental Affairs, Department of Water Affairs, Social Development and the South African Bureau of Standards, etc. The standards embody what Environmental Health Practitioners are expected to do in delivering functions as per the Scope of Profession, and as well as requirements for other sectors, such as business, public sector, private and public owned or occupied premises in order to comply with legislation for protection of public health.

The focus areas for these standards includes the Health Surveillance of Premises (which includes vector control, food safety, environmental pollution control, noise control, points

of entries and disposal of the dead), Health related Water Quality Monitoring and Waste management. These particular standards do not cover chemical safety, hazardous substances and communicable diseases control, although these standards will be developed over time. The standards are structured in chapters/functional areas:

Chapter 1: Norms and standards for **health surveillance of premises**, which scope of applicability covers 'premises' as defined in the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and set out the requirements for each premises to ensure compliance with legislation and also set out standards for environmental health monitoring by EHPs.

Chapter 2: Norms and Standards for **Port health**, which covers requirements for points of entries, ships and aircrafts

Chapter 3: Norms and Standards for **health related water quality monitoring**, which covers specific services essential in monitoring the quality of water by Environmental Health Practitioners for various settings and situations, as well as specifications for the quality of water.

Chapter 4: Norms and standards for **waste management**, which covers requirements for hazardous and general waste and monitoring requirements for EHPs.

Each chapter includes an index which guides the sections within the chapter.

Chapter 5: Norms and standards for **hazardous substances and chemicals management**, whose scope of applicability covers the storage, labeling, packaging and disposal of chemicals and hazardous substances.

4. The use of the Norms and Standards

The over-riding goals of these norms and standards are to assist in improving the provision of environmental health services in the country by EHPs and promoting compliance to environmental health related legislation by all. The primary activity therefore is to ensure that these standards are disseminated to all EHPs, particularly functional EHPs based at District and Metropolitan Municipality, Points of Entries and Provincial Departments of Health, as well as to the general public, and that adherence to these standards becomes a norm.

5. Monitoring and enforcing compliance with standards

Municipalities, provinces and Points of Entries can conduct self assessments to provide a baseline on the quality of EHS provided to the general public, provinces can also assess the Municipalities delivery of services. However, to ensure compliance with the National Norms and Standards, the National Department of Health will conduct environmental health service delivery assessments to rate the quality of EH services provided and to ensure adherence to the prescribed standards. A gap analysis will be conducted to identify gaps, strengths and opportunities in the provinces. The monitoring and enforcement of the prescribed norms and standards by environmental health will also be done in collaboration with the office of the Health Standards Compliance for monitoring of prescribed environmental health standards in health establishments.