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WATER THEFT

Three emergency tankers are stolen

ANNA COX
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AS THE water crisis hit Joburg this week, tankers sent to suburbs where taps have run dry have been stolen.

Over the past three days, three tankers have been stolen from areas where they were parked in South Hills, Westdene and Crown Gardens.

Joburg Water is appealing to residents not to steal these vehicles which are bringing relief to drought-stricken residents.

Spokesman Hilgard Matthews said the tankers were 2500-litre and 5000-litre tankers.

"We believe they are being stolen at night when people are sleeping. This is a very selfish act, as the tankers are there to assist residents," he said.

The bad news for water-strapped Gauteng is that there is only a 30percent chance of rain in the next few days with chances increasing to 70percent only from Monday.

But, warns the SA Weather Service, residents should not be fooled even if it does rain as this will bring only temporary relief.

Weather forecaster Cobus Cronje said there was still a long season ahead, and a few days of rain would not alleviate the drought.

"Residents should continue using water sparingly as a few thundershowers will not make much difference," he said.

Despite some cloud cover, tem-

peratures are expected to remain in the 30° and higher range, he said.

In the meantime, water was restricted to the Illovo water tower last night between midnight and 4am today to fill up Rand Water's Klipriviersberg bulk reservoir which supplies about 70percent of Gauteng. However, supply to Sandton was partially restored by 6am and was expected to be back to normal by midday.

In Zacharia Park, Lenasia, certain high-lying areas have water shortages.

South Hills faces a third day without normal water supply Rand Water's Meyershill reservoir is at 1.5percent full. Once it reaches about 10percent, Joburg Water will be able to pump to the South Hills.

This morning the Brixton, Crown Garden and South Hills towers were filling up after they ran dry and residents reported a steady flow of water.

Areas affected by shortages in the Hursthill reservoir are: Coronationville, Westdene, Westbury and Greenside.

This morning, City of Joburg mayor Parks Tau is expected to visit Joburg Water's control room and to hold a media briefing about the water situation.

The Gauteng Water and Sanitation Forum is to meet on Monday to discuss pooling water resources in the province.

Residents can obtain more information on Twitter @jhbwater; Facebook at Johannesburg Water and the website, www.johannesburgwater.co.za.

@annacox

Shack fire leaves residents homeless

KATE MORRISSEY,
ILANIT CHERNICK AND
KGOPI MABOTJA

THE REMAINS of shacks that burst into flames yesterday still smouldered this morning after a fire ravaged the Msawawa informal settlement near Kya Sand.

Residents picked through the debris to salvage anything they could, including material for makeshift shelters.

"I'm staying here. I'm never gonna move," resident Austin Sibanda said this morning. He had hooked up a small speaker to his car battery to blast cheerful music to raise people's spirits while they worked.

NGO Gift of the Givers arrived early in the morning to serve breakfast. The organisation said it would also help set up a study centre for matric students who were writing exams.

A Shoprite truck arrived a little later to serve breakfast along with Pets, an organisation that has been caring for dogs injured in the blaze.

Though the food lay ready, no one came to eat. "People are still in shock," said Saadiq Natha, a project manager with Gift of the Givers.

Most seemed focused on clinging to what they had left. A woman lay on a mattress, gripping it fiercely while she watched her neighbours work.

"My chest is not feeling right," Sibanda said, adding that he would no longer be able to travel home to visit family for the holidays.

"I don't have anything," said his neighbour who gestured to where his shack had been. Only grey dust remained.

A little after 9am, residents finally began lining up to eat.

It was not clear by this morning how many shacks were burnt down, with some reports saying hundreds were razed.

Last night resident Keith Muntlali said that since he settled in the area north of Joburg six years ago, there had never been a fire that had destroyed so many shacks at once.

"This is a disaster. We have never seen anything like this. My shack has burnt down. I don't know what I will do."



HELPING HAND: People from all over help residents from an informal settlement near Kya Sand save what belongings they can from a fire that ripped through their homes.
PICTURE: CONNALL OOSTERBROEK

Ward 32 councillor Matome Mafokwane said Gauteng MEC for Co-operative Governance, Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements Jacob Mamabolo had told the community about plans to deliver houses in the area in place of shacks.

Residents said that a paraffin stove left unattended in one of the spaza shops caused the fire.

According to City of Joburg EMS spokeswoman Nana Radebe, firefighters battled to contain the fire which was aggravated by high winds.

"We have over 300 displaced

families. Initially we struggled because there are no hydrants in the area. With the expertise we had we were able to make long hoses.

"Aid workers were also working very hard to help displaced residents," Radebe said.

She confirmed that no injuries or fatalities were reported. Meanwhile, a veld fire in Lan-seria last night left three people in a critical condition.

Emer-G-Med spokeswoman Danielle Dooley said the fire had been put out and the cause of the blaze was still being investigated.

Lonmin miners eager to flee sinking ship

OLIVIA KUMWENDA-MTAMBO
Reuters

AS LOSS-MAKING platinum producer Lonmin appeals for cash from shareholders and slashes costs, many of its mine workers are eager to grab redundancy deals and leave a company battling to stay afloat.

Battered by strikes, rising costs and weak platinum prices, Lonmin is seeking to raise \$407 million (R5.8 billion) in a share issue – priced at a 94 percent discount this week – and another \$370m in loans. It says the money is crucial for its survival. The company is also closing or mothballing several mine shafts and cutting 6000 jobs, or 15percent of its workforce. So far more than 3000 staff have left of their own volition, keen to snap up the voluntary redundancy and early retirement packages on offer, and others are seeking to follow. "Some of us don't want to wait until we die to get the money. I am a licensed rock drill operator so chances that I would be rehired at some point are high," said a



MOVING ON: Sunrise falls on Karre Shaft 4 at Lonmin Platinum mine ahead of the third Marikana massacre anniversary.
PICTURE: PHILL MAGAKOE

miner at Lonmin's Rowland shaft in Marikana. He is set to leave a company whose shares have tumbled over 90percent this year and which has knocked \$1.8bn off the value of its assets.

The 106-year-old firm is now fighting to convince the market it can be a viable business. "I am not sure Lonmin will exist in five years' time," said Bernstein Research analyst Paul Gait.

"How can you have the levels of wage inflation in South Africa coupled with increasing mine depth against the backdrop of zero productivity increases, and believe that is going to give you a sustainable future for the mining operations?"

Lonmin's plight was illustrated on Monday when it priced its rights issue at just 1 pence a share – a huge discount to the stock's closing price of 16.25pence on the previous Friday. That meant investors would have to buy 46 new shares for every one they already held, just to retain their current stake in percentage terms.

Analysts said the massive discount was a strategy to force investors to take up their entitlement or risk having their investment in the company almost completely diluted.

"I suspect supporting the rights is the only course of action for shareholders as the current equity is probably worthless without it," said a top-30 investor in Lonmin. Lonmin has said the share sale has been fully underwritten. It said

the Public Investment Corporation, which owned about 7percent of the company, had committed to buying its full entitlement and had "sub-underwritten a material portion" of the issue, over and above its entitlement. But investor concerns over the company's viability remain, due to rising costs and lower platinum prices. Spot platinum hit multi-year lows this year on concerns about oversupply and slowing demand in top consumer China. A five-month strike last year by platinum-sector workers who were demanding higher wages did little to boost prices due to ample above-ground stocks. Lonmin was hit hardest by the strike because, unlike peers such as Impala Platinum and Anglo American Platinum, virtually all its operations are concentrated in the strike-affected Rustenburg area.

Chief executive Ben Magara said the company had had a tough year but had not yet reached a point where it had to lay-off employees as some were leaving voluntarily.

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