# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 111**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 02)**

**Mr P A van Staden (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) With reference to the approximately 30 attacks on paramedics countrywide in the past six months, what measures is his department putting in place to stop these attacks;

(2) whether he intends to collaborate with other departments in an attempt to stop the specified attacks; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) which departments, (b) what are the details of such collaboration and (c) by what date can positive results be expected from the intended measures;

(3) whether he will make a statement on the matter?

###### NW122E

**REPLY:**

1. The National Department of Health, together with the Provincial Health Departments have embarked on a number of intervention strategies to help curb the ongoing attacks on Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Workforce. To this end we have established a National EMS Safety Forum and have since developed a National EMS Safety Guideline for all provinces to implement based on their specific needs **(Annexure A).** These comprehensive guidelines have four main areas, namely Focus on Staff, Community, Technology and Management. The National Department of Health is also in the process of introducing a 2-day course aimed addressing increasing safety awareness to enhance EMS personnel skills in identifying hostile environments, dealing with such situations, undertake evasive action and protection of the patient/s.
2. Yes. The National Department of Health has engaged with the South African Police Services (SAPS), National Joint Operations and Intelligence Structure (NatJOINTS), to highlight the ongoing attacks on EMS workforce and to escalate the matter with the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster (JCPS Cluster), with recommendation to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development to deal with perpetrators more stringently. As a result, the NatJOINTS has issued a NatJOINTS Instruction to SAPS Provincial Commissioners to work closely with Provincial EMS managers. The aim of the collaboration is to provide the necessary security services to EMS workforce and to prioritise all cases reported.

In addition, this matter has been carefully deliberated upon by the National Health Council and a decision was taken to have Izimbizos within the affected communities in order to create awareness and to advocate for the support of EMS by the communities. Should Izimbizos in the affected areas fail, then EMS would be forced to withdraw services from danger areas to avert loss of life or injury.

Intervention strategies at both National and Provincial levels, but are not limited to, are listed below:

* Participation and keynote address by Deputy Minister, Dr J Phaahla, at the National EMS Safety Symposium held at Cape Peninsula University of Technology in late 2018, involving all stakeholders which culminated in the development of an EMS Safety Position statement **(Annexure B);**
* Denouncement of such attacks by the Minister of Health at the launch of National EMS Day in 2019;
* Radio and television interviews;
* Interaction with staff at grass roots level;
* Participate in demonstrations and marches denouncing attacks on EMS staff;
* Interact with the community in the affected communities; and
* Feedback to National and Provincial parliamentary structures.

Intervention strategies by the EMS Managers and Senior Officials of the Provincial Health Departments include:

* Regular stakeholders meeting with the Community Police Forum (CPF) in the identified affected areas;
* On receipt of an emergency call, the EMS Communication Centre verifies the call with the CPF, who immediately respond to the location and confirm the emergency;
* The EMS team respond to a safe area within the Red Zone (declared by SAPS) and are then escorted to the patient by SAPS;
* Ongoing discussions with the labour caucus, CPF, SAPS and EMS management, have resulted in a decision to train CPF members in emergency medical care (First Responder Course) so as to provide the patients with immediate medical care upon the arrival of EMS; and
* In addition, the media are invited to ride along with EMS to report first hand of the experience, challenges and difficult situation faced by the emergency services on a daily basis, EMS management and staff are regularly interviewed by the media to highlight the dangers and challenges EMS is confronted with, when serving such areas.

Interaction with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, EMS Management and the Safety and Security Cluster continues, to ensure that:

* Legal counsel employed by the state follows up the investigations to ensure prioritisation and possible conviction; and
* Expert witness testimony by senior EMS manager on impact to EMS staff, EMS management, the community and service delivery.

1. I, as the Minister of Health, along with Deputy Minister of Health, Dr J Phaahla and senior managers of the National Department of Health have made several statements in this regard in the past and will continue to denounce such attacks going forward. It must be noted that there are a number of interventions implemented at multiple levels of government, yet, the attacks continue. No matter what we do, it is never enough, but we must continue to try, as we deal with this largely socioeconomic challenge. The National Department of Health together with our sector departments and provincial counterparts will continue to look for additional ways to address this serious challenge.

END.