

# THE PRESIDENCY

# REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**QUESTION NUMBER:1872 (NW2123E)**

**1872. Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister in The Presidency for Electricity:**

Whether Eskom has an official or unofficial policy and/or practice, where in the event of illegal connections being found in a residential and/or business area, it suspends the electricity supply to the entire area, causing power outages for legitimate consumers, in some areas for up to six months while for 10 weeks currently in Umkomaas, on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal; if not, what (a) is the position in this regard and (b) steps of intervention will he take to deal with this practice; if so, what are the relevant details of the policy and its legality?

**REPLY**

a) The failed transformer PAMS 65 that is referred to by the Honourable Mr Singh was replaced on Saturday 13 May 2023 according to the process where all customers who had tampered with their meters to avoid paying for electricity had paid the required fine and illegal connections had been removed. Important facts to note regarding this transformer are that some customers were found to have converted themselves to prepaid meters and had installed sub-meters; in such cases, the revenue does not come to Eskom.

Eskom never disconnected or suspended electricity to this area; however, the transformer overloaded and isolated itself due to overload caused by illegal connections, bypassed meters, and vandalism of the infrastructure.

Eskom is experiencing a very significant increase in transformer failures in residential areas due to meter tampering, illegal connections, and vandalism of Eskom’s infrastructure. Replacement of infrastructure without addressing the root cause has become unsustainable, costly, and unsafe for Eskom’s technicians and members of the public, specifically also innocent children.

In such cases, Eskom has an obligation to eliminate the associated safety risk before a transformer is replaced. The replacement of transformers without resolving the problem leads to repeated failures and unsafe conditions for our technical team and the community, and this is also financially unsustainable.

The existing infrastructure has been installed to cater for the supply requirements of Eskom’s legally connected customers.

(b)In addition to the Electricity Regulation Act and its licence conditions, Eskom is required to comply with, among others, NRS 047 Part 1: Quality of Service (“NRS 047”) and the Distribution System Code (“the Distribution Code”), attached to this as Annexures A and B, respectively, which regulate matters pertaining to unplanned supply interruptions. Clause 4.5.3 of NRS 047 regulates the restoration of supply after unplanned interruptions. Under “normal circumstances”, Eskom would be required to follow the restoration period provided in NRS 047. This provision must be read together with paragraph 18.4(1) of the Distribution Code, which requires customers to comply with instructions from Eskom before the supply of electricity is restored. Paragraph 3(1) of the Distribution Code, furthermore, states that Eskom is required to take remedial action to relieve any condition that may jeopardise the reliability of the Distribution system.

Therefore, before the transformer can be replaced and supply restored, an audit must be conducted, and the customers normalised. In line with the regulations and Eskom’s processes, community members who are found to have tampered with their meters are issued with tamper fines of R6 052.60 per tampered meter and all illegal connections are removed. Furthermore, at least 75% of customers legally connected to the transformer must be in good standing before the transformer is replaced. This is to ensure that the infrastructure on the ground will be able to cater for the required load.