

**DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC ENTERPRISES**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR A WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO.: PQ 1888**

**QUESTION:**

**1888. Mr T B Mabhena (DA to ask the Minister of Public Enterprises:**

(1) In light of the fact that Pimville in Soweto has over the past 60 days experienced no less than 160 power cuts collectively across all the zones, besides the planned Eskom load-shedding schedules, which has resulted in disruptive and at times violent protests with negative impact on many small businesses in the area, and in view of the recent 11 power cuts in a space of 24 hours, on Tuesday 22 June 2021 in Pimville Zone 6, what (a) are the reasons that Eskom is totally ignoring the community of Pimville by not resolving the problem and/or offering a permanent solution and (b) measures has Eskom put in place to date to ensure that there (i) are no power cuts and (ii) is a permanent solution to the power cuts in Pimville;

(2) whether there has been any assessment conducted recently to ascertain the extent of the damage to Eskom infrastructure in Pimville; if not, why not; if so, what are the details of the extent of the damage? **NW2116E**

**REPLY:**

***According to the information received from Eskom:***

 (1)(a) Eskom is not ignoring the community of Pimville.

Eskom has responded to all 32 faults logged by the Pimville customers since June 2021. Regrettably, 24 of the 32 faults relate to cable theft, five to network overload and three were due to planned maintenance.

In the Pimville area Eskom has ~24 700 registered customers however 70% (~17 300) of these customers do not buy electricity.

The causes of power interruptions in Pimville are vandalism, cable theft and illegal connections which result in an overloaded network.

It is to be noted that queries and faults from customers that do not buy electricity are scheduled for meter audits. Upon auditing, customers that are found to be buying electricity legally are restored. However, customers that are found to be buying illegal electricity tokens; not buying at all; or have tampered meters, are issued with fines and their supply is only restored once payment of the tamper fine is received.

Recently, the longest outage experienced was due to infrastructure vandalism at Moroka substation which affected supply in multiple areas in Soweto, including Pimville. The vandalism resulted in an explosion at the substation which took almost a week to repair due to the extent of the damages.

Even though Eskom secures the substation, thieves still find a way to break in, steal cables and other equipment, leading to massive destruction and extended unavailability of electricity to customers.

(1)(b)(i) and (ii) Eskom has taken the following measures:

* Eskom replaced the credit meters with prepaid split meters in the area, where amongst other benefits customers are able to manage their consumption and limit it to their affordability, however most communities continue to bypass these meters resulting in vandalised equipment, indiscriminate use of energy and overloaded networks. Eskom has tried to remove these meter bypasses but experiences retaliation from the community which in some cases, makes it unsafe for our technicians to work in those areas.
* In cases where major networks are affected resulting in extended outages, Eskom dispatches technicians to the fault areas and customers are updated through contact details of the registered account-holders. Customers are also updated through media statements, radio, and via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
* Eskom implements load reduction in all areas where the networks are at risk of being damaged by overloading, and Pimville is one of these areas. Load reduction is carried out to prevent loss or damage of equipment and extended outages. Customers are notified of pending load reduction, which normally lasts for a maximum of five (5) hours and is implemented up to twice a day per customer.
* Eskom continues to educate customers on the safe and responsible use of electricity. Eskom encourages communities to protect their infrastructure by reporting any nefarious activities undertaken by their neighbours including Eskom technicians and contractors. Eskom intends to run community co-operatives where communities will co-own the problem and joint solutions will be sought and implemented.

(2) Yes, Eskom conducts routine assessments as required by our maintenance philosophies.

The tampering and the bypassing of meters, illegal connections and unauthorised operations result in electricity demand exceeding the design capacity of the network and overloads and damages electricity infrastructure i.e., transformers.

Of ~132 transformers in the area, six failed recently due to overloading however three have since been restored. The cost of replacing a transformer is ~R400 000.

For Pimville area alone Eskom has lost revenue of ~R36 million in the last four (4) months.