

**MINISTER**

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, WATER AND SANITATION**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO.: 2378**

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**Mr X Ngwezi (IFP) to ask the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation:**

(1) Whether, in view of the Free State asbestos roofing scandal (details furnished) and the arrests relating to it, and given that residents in the Free State continue to be exposed to asbestos and that long-term consequences may result in fatal health complications, her department alongside its provincial structures informed affected households about potential health effects resulting from long-term exposure; if so, what total number of residents have been reached and informed thus far;

(2) whether her department has statistical data on the total number of (a) households and (b) residents who are experiencing health complications from long-term exposure to asbestos; if so, what (i) are the findings from the statistical data and (ii) assistance is being given to those persons affected by long-term exposure? W2953E

**REPLY:**

1. The Department acknowledges that studies reveal that there are health effects of asbestos which are directly related to the condition of the asbestos-containing material. These studies further highlight that asbestos is dangerous when the material is broken thus increasing the amount of fibres that can be emitted from asbestos products. Whilst the need to inform the affected households exist, Section 3 of the Housing Act of 1997 differentiates the responsibility of the national and provincial government in respect of housing development. Therefore, the responsibility of developing houses and its related beneficiary administration processes rests with the provincial government.

Notwithstanding the above, I will ensure that the relevant MECs table reports on this matter at our MINMEC meetings where issues of concurrent functions are discussed. Further, it should be noted that the use of asbestos is against the norms and standards of the Department and it is also a violation of the existing government regulations, the regulation on the Prohibition of the Use, Manufacturing, Import and Export of Asbestos and Asbestos Containing Materials forms part of the Environment Conservation Act of 1989).

1. The department does not have the latest statistical data on the total number of households and residents that are experiencing health complications from long-term asbestos exposure. However, what the Honourable Member is raising is part of the joint work we are doing with the Departments of Environmental Affairs (the convenor) and Public Works and Infrastructure.