# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 384**

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

**Inkosi B N Luthuli (IFP) to ask the Minister of Health:**

###### Whether, following an unknown suspected gas leak and inhalation at a school and homes in the surrounding area of Richards Bay, where children as well as adults developed nausea, vomiting, difficulties in breathing with many having collapsed and transported to hospitals and clinics in the Richards Bay and Empangeni areas, his department has investigated the incident; if not, why not; if so, what (a) are the results of the investigation and (b) is being done to prevent the incident from happening in the future?

###### NW398E

**REPLY:**

The National Department of Health is indeed the custodian of Health Services in the country, the Constitution has, in Schedule 4B, assigned some of the Health Services to Municipality later defined in section 1 of the National Health Act, 2003 (Act No 61 of 2003) as Municipal Health Services. The District Municipality is therefore responsible for the services but monitored and supported by both the Provincial and National Departments of Health.

The matter was investigated through the King Cetshawayo District Municipality lead by the Air Quality Management Unit in collaboration with the Environmental Health Unit (Municipal Health Services) thereof.

(a) The results of the investigations are as follows: There was no substantive or adequate information provided on the type of gas that was inhaled by the pupils during the interviews with the affected school (Richards Bay High School) and their neighbouring schools. The authorities could not access the main complainants through the Richards Bay Clean Air Association (RBCAA) Arboretum Station that would have provided adequate information on the type of fumes/smell experienced, times, duration and the areas (location). In addition, the available ambient monitoring data and emission data does not provide a conclusive source of emissions due to the reported symptoms not related to the monitored sulphur dioxide.

(b) The authorities to conduct a further investigation until the root cause is identified; availability of public awareness posters on how to log air quality complaints; conduct awareness in local schools on air quality. Fire, rescue and disaster management as well as the community are urged to log complaints through the authorities’ (City of uMhlathuze and King Cetshwayo District Municipality). The available complaints systems telephone numbers are 035 907 5000 and 080 011 1258 respectively).

END.