

**MINISTRY**

**PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Department of Public Works l Central Government Offices l 256 Madiba Street l Pretoria l Contact: +27 (0)12 406 1627 l +27 (0)12 406 1224

Private Bag X9155 l CAPE TOWN, 8001 l RSA 4th Floor Parliament Building l 120 Plain Street l CAPE TOWN l Tel: +27 21 468 6900 Fax: +27 21 462 4592

[www.publicworks.gov.za](http://www.publicworks.gov.za)

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 745 [NW9479E]**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO.: 13 of 2020**

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**745. Ms S J Graham (DA) to ask the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure:**

What mechanisms is her department putting in place to stimulate the construction sector in responding to the lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to bring about (a) a phased reopening of the sector, (b) (i) the drafting of plans and (ii) implementation and enforcement of risk and mitigation plans sector-wide to prevent infections on sites, (c) the reopening of support organisations (details furnished) and (d) a plan around the infrastructure development spending that forms part of the medium-term expenditure framework?

**NW949E**

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**REPLY:**

**The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure**

1. (b)(i)(ii) (c) (d) The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) has worked with National Command Council on COVID-19 (NCC) and the several work streams in the National Joint Operations and Intelligence Structure (NatJoints) to ensure the construction industry reopens as soon as possible. This included permitting all public works to resume in Level 4 and resuming construction industry on a greater scale during Level 3 from 1 June

The DPWI together with the Presidency’s Infrastructure and Investment Office is currently in the process of drafting an infrastructure economic recovery plan. This plan is aimed to stimulate and transform the construction industry increasing investment and economic participation, while investing in South Africa’s infrastructure.

As for DPWI’s entities:

**AGREMENT SOUTH AFRICA**

The entity has developed protocols for the return of staff members to the office. The protocols incorporate the requirement for staff to wear masks all the time; the suspension of physical meetings; screening of staff upon entry to the premises; and also managing the office space by making configurations to allow for physical distancing around common areas.

Agrement SA staff will for the most part continue to work remotely. The entity will apply the Business Continuity Plan, which incorporates the use of digital platforms to hold meetings, and applying digital options for various areas of the organisation’s operations. The organisation is exploring the feasibility of using electronic media to conduct scheduled quality inspection at sites where Agrement SA approved products are being used.

**Council for the Built Environment (CBE)**

The enity has developed Covid-19 Risk Mitigation measures for its employees which incorporate the following:

* Provising suitable cleaning materials and protective personal equipment for the cleaning staff.
* Provision of individual sanitizing products to staff members.
* Notices around the office space with warning for staff to ensure that they keep their masks on and to sanitize their hands frequently.
* Provision is also being made for all meetings to observe physical distancing requirements.

There have been interactions with key industry role players through their voluntary associations to develop plans to prevent infections on sites (although currently these sites are not yet opened due to the requirement for the construction sector to open up only at level 2 in terms of the Disaster Management Act regulations.)

The Professional Coucils have made preparations for the reopening of offices with phased return of staff to the office. Preparation have also been made for the office spaces to be Covid-19 safe, including deep cleaning of the offices, making a requirement for staff to wear masks all the time and sanitizing their hands frequently.

**Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)**

On the phased reopening of the sector:

The CIDB will develop emergency procurement tools to fast track the backlogs in the infrastructure projects by helping clients to develop emergency procurement policies. Plans are underway for cidb and National Treasury to develop prescripts for advance payments on construction projects. The intention by cidb and National Treasury is to issue instructions to public sector clients to waive deposits for construction tenders.

A further planned intervention is the establishment of framework contracts to shorten the solicitation and evaluation periods. There will be additional support for the cidb Standard for Uniformity in Construction Procurement provisions through the categorisation of projects for streamlined and simplified evaluation criteria.

The cidb has implemented provisions to support contractors in terms of their registration with the cidb. Registration expiry dates have been extended. This enables contractors to be able to access opportunities during the lockdown and immediately after the lockdown.

The cidb has also developed a Covid-19 survey in collaboration with the University of Johannesburg to investigate the impact of the pandemic on the construction industry. This will assist the cidb in finding ways to help contractors mitigate the effect of the lockdown on their companies.

The drafting, implementation and enforcement of risk and mitigation plans sector-wide to prevent infections on sites:

The construction industry is known to be well organized and commitments by industry have been made. The Construction Health and Safety Accord signed by Government, Organised Labour and Organised Business further reinforces the considerations to prevent infections on sites.

Despite having and complying with the occupational health and safety laws and regulations, the industry will put additional measures in place to ensure the health and safety of employees on sites.

The mitigation measures relate to the following risks:

• Travelling to work on public transport

• Site access by non-employees

• Personal Hygiene on sites

• Adequacy of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

• Safety at Site meetings

The specific risk mitigation measures include:

• Keeping contractors informed of all new safety related legislations.

• Constant Health and safety presentations, seminars and conferences.

• Inform industry and the Department of Labour of relevant incident/accident statistics including costs and recommend preventative action.

• Assist and advise contractors on how to improve their safety management programme.

• Arrange safety related training courses for contractors and their employees off site.

• Assist contractors as and when required with incident and accident investigations and reports.

**Independent Development Trust (IDT)**

The IDT has developed and is already implementing a Back to Work Readiness Plan with clearly articulated guidelines for all its staff. The plan entails, among others, preparing and resourcing of the workplace to ensure that it is fully compliant with the published Department of Employment and Labour’s Workplace Preparedness guidelines. As part of the Plan, the return of staff to work is being staggered, augmented by remote work arrangements for certain categories of staff, where deemed necessary. The entity also has a Steering Committee in place that is monitoring and assessing daily the implementation of the Back to Work Readiness Plan.