



MINISTRY
HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Media Statement

Clarity has been sought on the presentation made by the Minister of Health to the NCOP yesterday regarding the determination of alert levels for hotspots.

An old slide was presented stating hotspots would remain at level 4. That slide is now outdated and was inadvertently included in a presentation that had been updated. The slide was part of a presentation previously done by health department prior to the NCCC resolving on the final approach to be adopted for the country, which was subsequently announced by His Excellency, President MC Ramaphosa.

This note seeks to clarify the enquiries received.

Firstly, as announced by President MC Ramaphosa on the 24th May 2020, we confirm that the whole country will move to **Alert Level 3** on the 1st June 2020.

Further to that, government has taken measures to identify areas that have been defined as epidemiological hotspots. As clearly explained by the President in his speech, these are areas that have more than 5 infected people per 100 000 population, or areas where the infections are increasing at a fast pace.

As it stands, government has immediately taken steps to intervene in areas that are regarded as hotspots by deploying experts and specialists who will implement measures to curb the spread. These areas also require heightened levels of tracing of contacts of positive patients, ensuring that those who are positive remain in quarantine/ isolation and those who cannot self-quarantine, are accommodated in quarantine facilities provided for by provinces.

This will limit the risk of further infection to other members of the communities, including their families (community transmission).

In some of these hotspots, cluster outbreaks have also been identified. This means, positive cases arising from people participating in the same activity within a specific area. These include factories, grocery shops, farms etc. Those areas also require a rapid response of screening, testing and the tracing of contacts. Cluster outbreaks drive the pandemic because spread occurs within the cluster then individuals take the virus home with them, thus causing community outbreaks. It is for this reason that we emphasize the importance of submitting to appropriate isolation once a person has tested positive or go into appropriate quarantine when a person has been identified as a direct contact of a positive patient. This reduces the risk of infecting others while waiting to be tested if you are a contact.

This therefore means that as the whole country moves to level 3, there will be constant assessment of each and every area and its rate of infection, in which case, further containment measures and restrictions may be considered. If the spread of the infection is not contained despite the above mentioned interventions, government will make a determination on whether to return that specific area, (i.e. metropolitan, district, sub district, ward) to alert level 4 or 5. This will be done rapidly and in an effort to contain and manage the spread, and also to ensure that our health facilities are not overwhelmed by the rapid rise of positive cases in that area.

This therefore means that as the whole country moves to level 3, there will be a constant assessment of each and every area and its rate of infection.

This raises the importance of social behaviour: members of the community can and must take it upon themselves to observe social distancing by keeping more than 1 metre distance from the next person; constantly wash and/ or sanitize hands; wearing a face mask; avoid touching ones face with unwashed hands; and clean surfaces we come into contact with. We also want to emphasise that staying at home is remains key and for those employees who can work from home, we urge employers to promote and facilitate this new culture. For those employees who must still go to work, they must embrace the new way of life which will protect them, their families and their fellow workers.

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Dr Zwelini Mkhize
Minister of Health
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