environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 616 {NW732E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 6 of 2021

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Mr M N Paulsen (EFF) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

Given that air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) are essential for a country like South Africa that relies heavily on fossil fuels, (a) how often does her department inspect the condition of the AQMS and (b) what measures are in place for her department to react to any adverse measurements at the AQMS?

616. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

There are a total of one hundred and thirty-five (135) Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AQMS) owned by provinces, municipalities and the South African Weather Service (SAWS). While the department provides support to provinces and municipalities on AQMS operations and maintenance, the department does not own the AQMS.

(a) The conditions of AQMS are inspected in line with established standard operating procedures for AQMS operations and management. For routine services, the stations are inspected every two weeks by AQMS technicians. These inspections are guided by checklists which contain a list of activities that should be undertaken by the technicians. The checklist includes physical inspection of the AQMS environmental conditions, the general conditions of all instruments, power supply and air conditioner status, as well as detailed instrument diagnostic checks. The station inspections are documented and reported in line with standard operating procedures. During these inspections, if instruments failures are identified, the instruments are repaired

onsite by technicians, where possible. Otherwise, if the technicians cannot repair the instruments because of major faults, the equipment is removed from the AQMS for further repair and maintenance.

In addition to the biweekly visits, every three months, comprehensive inspections are conducted to ensure that data collected from all instruments are credible and accurate. In these visits, the technicians undertake the general inspection and also calibrate and assess the performance of instruments. These visits are regarded as separate quarterly AQMS visits, and there are four visits per station per year.

There are also those situations when the AQMS might stop operating due to unforeseen circumstances such as power failure disruptions on instruments. In these situations, the AQMS are inspected as soon as is possible whenever an incident is identified on the South African Air Quality Information System (SAAQIS) as a disruption in data.

(b) Information from the AQMS is a major driver in air quality management decision making. When adverse measurements are observed at the AQMS, different jurisdictions have tailor-made interventions designed in air quality management plans or other strategic government programs to identify sources contributing to adverse measurements, and to implement necessary air pollution reduction measures. With the regulated air pollution sources such as industries, these interventions include enhanced compliance monitoring and enforcement through the atmospheric emission licencing command and control regime. For non-regulated pollution sources, such as veld-fires, transport, waste burning or residential fuel burning and others, air quality management interventions are designed to target those pollution sources, towards progressive realisation of air that is not harmful to the health and well-being of the public.

Regards

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MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 16/3/2021