



**economic development
& tourism**

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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Attention: Journalist, News Editors and Executive Producers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEC NGOMANE CHECKS ESSENTIAL BUSINESS OPERATIONS COMPLIANCE WITH LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS

Mbombela – Finance, Economic Development and Tourism MEC, Mr Pat Ngomane, today visited the SAPPI Lumati Mill in Barberton, Mpumalanga, to check whether the company complies with the national lockdown regulations. This was his second visit to the company this week. On Tuesday, 31 March 2020, MEC Ngomane visited the Mill to verify an allegation made by a caller on Barberton Community Radio station – who claimed to be working for the Mill – that the company was operating despite it providing non-essential goods. The MEC has since established that the Mill is duly classified as an essential service and goods provider.

“I went back to the Mill again today, following my visit on Tuesday, to check progress with regards to compliance to the lockdown Regulations. On Tuesday, it appeared that even though the company was authorised to continue with its operations, given that it provides essential goods, its operations were continuing as normal. I stressed to them that they cannot operate at 100% or as normal, and I implored them to reduce their workforce during this period because I did not believe that all departments at their Mill produce essential goods”, explained MEC Ngomane.

The gazetted Regulations pertaining to the lockdown, due to the COVID-19 disease, stipulates that workers should be provided with protective gear like face masks; observe appropriate social distancing; and that hand sanitisers should be provided by their employers.

“I was indeed satisfied with their revised shift plan, which they have at least reduced from three (3) to two (2) for the duration of the lockdown. This will ensure that fewer and only people producing essential goods are at work. As I had advised, they have introduced a register for all visitors to the Mill; and they even check the temperature of all people going into their building and Mill”, added Mr Ngomane.



After the visit to the Mill, MEC Ngomane visited the Home Affairs office, as well as a clinic in Hazyview, just outside White River. The purpose of the visit was to also monitor compliance with the Regulations by government officials at the two (2) service sites.

“I was satisfied that officials at the Home Affairs office in Hazyview, and at the Hazyview Clinic, were provided with protective facial masks and gloves. There was even hand sanitisers for our people, at those two (2) government service sites. We even distributed pocket sanitisers to staff and the public. In my interaction with our people, I had further stressed the need for social distancing, as a way of avoiding possible infections”, concluded the MEC.

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*Issued by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism
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