

Water and Sanitation in the News

Water affairs silenced as sewage flows

Most of South Africa's 800 municipal water treatment plants are releasing raw sewage into the country's rivers. Water affairs department officials say they have been told to look the other way until after next year's local government elections. "We have been led to understand that until the 2016 elections there should be less focus on exposing any wrongdoings at municipal plants," says a water affairs enforcement official, who insisted on anonymity. There was no explicit command, but the "order" came from the top of the department, says the official, who is one of three in the department who confirmed the hands-off edict occurred. ...This means municipalities have little oversight, the official says. "Our hands are tied by politicking and heavily polluted water is the result."



Water affairs spokesperson Sputnik Ratau says there has been no interference with the actions of enforcement officials. "The enforcement unit is very active regarding the monitoring of all kinds of activity with an impact on our water sources and environment." This involves a carrot and stick approach, he says. "Enforcement needs to be understood as a way of also assisting those that pollute to know their responsibilities." ...

Source: *Mail & Guardian*, 31 July 2015

Context

A week ago, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) researchers have warned that continued population and economic growth, combined with climate change, could result in serious water shortages in some parts of the country by 2025. They also emphasised that these projections did not take **water quality** into account, despite the fact that water use was dependent on both water availability and water quality. Of particular concern is the state of wastewater treatment facilities as the most recent Green Drop status report indicated

that about half of the country's 824 treatment works were in either a poor or critical condition.

Reported instances of major wastewater treatment failures causing serious pollution to some of the country's most important rivers and eventually drinking water sources are becoming more frequent. In one such instance after Rand Water it visited the Standerton plant in Mpumalanga last year following citizens' complaints, the utility gave a report that could hold true for most other plants: "The effluent was, in essence, raw sewage." The main cause was a lack of regular maintenance over a protracted period of time, the report said. This led to corrosion, inoperable pumps, worn bio-filter bearings and inoperable monitoring equipment. "**There is no scheduled maintenance programme** and currently no in-house artisans are available to undertake repairs and maintenance work."

Source: *Infrastructurene.ws*, 03 Aug. 2015, *Mail & Guardian*, 31 July 2015

The scheduling and tracking of maintenance – including preventative maintenance – are some of the critical functions (in terms of preventing water treatment failures) supported by the Municipal Assistant™ system's asset module. The MA System was developed to provide local municipalities with the necessary tools to ensure the sustainable use and management of their water resources. The MA system's approach to drinking water and waste water management support is comprehensive as it **incorporates all the vital components** needed to ensure efficient and sustainable water supply.



WAMTech are specialists in implementing technology systems for improved governance, focussing on Water and Public Health Information Systems

Visit our websites:

www.wamsys.co.za
www.municipalassistant.co.za
www.ewisa.co.za