

Violence escalates amid ongoing Cape Metropole taxi strike, affecting emergency response

By Katja Hamilton

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The ongoing taxi strike in the Cape Metropole, which has seen the South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) members reach Day 6 of its negotiations with the City of Cape Town, has seen an escalation of violence as arsonists and vandals have attacked the Nolungile Community Health Centre in Khayelitsha, causing extensive damage to the property.



Source: Twitter/@_likebrandon

The incident in Khayelitsha occurred on the night of Monday, 7 August following closure of the facility the previous due to safety concerns.

Western Cape Minister of Health and Wellness, NomaFrench Mbombo, added: “Any form of violence or damage to property cannot be condoned. I am deeply disappointed by the incidents of vandalism and arson that have taken place at Nolungile Community Health Centre, which occurred even after it was closed.

“It is beyond me that anyone would wish to damage a place that is meant to provide safety and health to residents. As minister, I reiterate my call to everyone to allow the safe passage of healthcare workers so that they can continue to render services to communities. Our system cannot function without our staff being on the frontlines taking care of patients.”

Unrest in the region has intensified in certain rural areas, leading to further health-service reductions due to transport disruption and safety fears. In addition, more than 70 areas have been declared red zones which will result in delayed response times in emergency medical and forensic pathology services.

“  The City of Cape Town has obtained an urgent court interdict against the [#TaxiStrike](#).

No person, vehicle, taxi or driver may obstruct, interfere or block any vehicle on any public road, harm passengers, or delay the flow of traffic.

This is a victory for the rule of law.     pic.twitter.com/aL4XQRJZXN— Democratic Alliance (@Our_DA) [August 8](#).

Saadiq Kariem, chief of operations of The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness said health facilities situated in areas that are not deemed safe, have been closed. The public are advised of the following service implications that the strike action and subsequent criminal activities will have on 8 August:

Central hospitals (Tygerberg, Red Cross and Groote Schuur Hospital)

- Elective surgery remains postponed.
- Only emergency surgery will be conducted.

District hospitals

- Elective surgery is postponed at Mitchells Plain Hospital.
- Karl Bremer and Helderberg Hospitals operating at reduced capacity.

Community health centres and clinics

- Facilities in Gugulethu, Nyanga, Crossroads, Inzame Zabantu, Nolungile, Michael Mapongwana and the Du Noon Maternity Obstetrics Unit are closed.
- Community-based care in these areas remain suspended as well as in Wallacedene and Bloekombos.
- In addition, several City of Cape Town clinics have also been forced to close due the volatility of these areas.

Rural hospitals: Oudtshoorn, Knysna, George, Paarl and Worcester will operate at reduced capacity.

Community health centres and clinics: Empilisweni clinic (Worcester), Nduli clinic (Ceres) are closed while Mbekweni clinic (Paarl) is operating at reduced capacity.

The extent of the damages at Khayelisha's Nolungile Community Health Centre is being assessed by The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness.

Kariem added, "We appeal to everyone to work with us in ensuring our staff and health facilities are kept safe as they are there to provide medical care to everyone. Our deep appreciation is conveyed to health and other essential services staff, who have continued where possible to deliver services to those in need."

Santaco, which is striking primarily in response to a new City of Cape Town by-law that has seen large numbers of taxis being impounded, has confirmed the national taxi strike will continue until Wednesday, 9 August.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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