



MEDIA STATEMENT

408 REPORTED ILLNESS CASES: BRONKHORSTSPRUIT WATER CRISIS IS A FAILURE OF GOVERNANCE THAT DEMANDS ACCOUNTABILITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The reported 408 cases of gastrointestinal illness across Bronkhorstspuit and surrounding communities represent a deeply disturbing public-health crisis that demands urgent answers, decisive action and accountability from those entrusted with delivering basic services.

According to findings reported by the Department of Water and Sanitation, the Bronkhorstspuit Water Treatment Works supplied water without chlorination between 24 September and 14 October 2026. Investigations also identified concerning levels of bacterial contamination, while stool samples from affected patients detected several disease-causing organisms.

These are not minor administrative oversights. They are failures with direct consequences for people's health, dignity and safety.

How does a municipality allow water to be supplied without chlorination for weeks, while thousands of residents depend on that water for their daily survival?

Who was responsible for monitoring water quality? Who knew that chlorination had stopped? Why were communities not adequately warned? What contingency measures were in place when the chlorine supply failed? And who will be held accountable for the consequences?

These questions demand clear, documented answers, not political statements designed to manage public anger.

For families in Bronkhorstspuit, Zithobeni, Dark City, Rethabiseng and Sokhulumi, water is not an abstract municipal performance indicator. It is what parents use to prepare meals, what children drink at school, what households need to maintain hygiene and what vulnerable residents depend on to remain healthy.

The fact that many reported patients were children under four makes this crisis particularly alarming. Children, older people and those with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable to illnesses associated with contaminated water.

Residents should never have to question whether the water coming out of their taps is safe enough to drink.

The reported failure to chlorinate water must be examined alongside the wider problems identified in the water supply chain, including sewage pollution affecting the Bronkhorstspuit River and failures involving wastewater infrastructure.

A reliable water system requires functioning sewage treatment works, properly operated treatment plants, consistent water-quality testing, adequate chemical supplies, competent oversight and timely public communication.

When these safeguards fail, the consequences are borne by ordinary people — not by the officials sitting in municipal offices.

If the municipality knew that the plant could no longer chlorinate water, why was the supply not managed in a way that protected residents? If officials did not know, that raises equally serious questions about monitoring, management and accountability.

Either way, the public deserves a full explanation.

We call on the City of Tshwane, the Gauteng provincial government and the national Department of Water and Sanitation to:

1. Publish the facts. Release the relevant water-quality test results, operational records, incident timelines and findings of the investigations, subject to appropriate protection of personal information.
2. Guarantee safe alternative water. Ensure that every affected community receives sufficient, accessible and regularly tested drinking water for as long as the tap-water safety warning remains in force.
3. Protect vulnerable residents. Strengthen medical screening, treatment and public-health surveillance, with particular attention to young children, schools, clinics and elderly residents.
4. Establish individual and institutional accountability. Determine who was responsible for the failure to chlorinate, the breakdown in operational controls and the inadequate communication with affected communities. Take appropriate disciplinary or legal action where evidence warrants it.
5. Provide a transparent recovery plan. Publish the independent investigation's findings, corrective measures, testing results and clear criteria for declaring the tap water safe again.
6. Fix the entire water and sanitation chain. Address upstream sewage pollution, dysfunctional wastewater infrastructure, treatment-plant operations and chemical-supply contingency planning to prevent a recurrence.

Restoring the treatment plant is necessary, but it is not the same as proving that the water is safe. Residents need transparent, repeated test results and clear, authoritative confirmation before normal use resumes.

The absence of reported deaths does not diminish the seriousness of hundreds of reported illnesses. Nor should the restoration of chlorine supplies be presented as the end of the crisis while affected households remain uncertain about the safety of their water.

The people of Bronkhorstspuit and surrounding communities deserve to know what happened, why it happened, who failed in their duties and what will be done to ensure that it never happens again.

Clean water is a basic service. Public safety is a government responsibility. Accountability is not optional.

We stand with the affected communities and call for urgent intervention, transparent communication and consequences proportionate to any misconduct or negligence established by the investigations.

The people must come before political convenience, administrative excuses and institutional self-protection.

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