



RAND WATER

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MEDIA STATEMENT

RAND WATER UPDATES ITS MUNICIPAL CUSTOMERS ON THE PLANNED MAINTENANCE OF THE LESOTHO HIGHLANDS TUNNEL: 1 OCTOBER 2024 TO 31 MARCH 2025

Rand Water would like to update its municipal customers about the planned maintenance work on the transfer and delivery tunnels of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) that is scheduled from **1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025**. The Lesotho Highlands Tunnel is a project of the Department of Water and Sanitation and **Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA)** – an entity of the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) manages it on behalf of the Department.

The maintenance of the Lesotho Highlands tunnel will be overseen by the **Lesotho Highlands Water Commission** (a joint governance body between the Republic of South Africa and the Government of Lesotho) and will be jointly undertaken by the **Lesotho Highlands Development Agency (LHDA)** and the TCTA.

Inspections and maintenance of the tunnels are conducted between **five (5)** and **ten (10)** years intervals. The last maintenance of the Lesotho Highlands Tunnel (LHT) was conducted in 2019. The maintenance of the tunnel is necessary to preserve the integrity of the delivery tunnels and to ensure sustainable transfer of water to the **Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS)**.

The LHWP comprises of dams and tunnels throughout Lesotho, consisting of the Katse Dam, Muela power station, Mohale Dam, and 82 km of tunnels which transfers **780** million m³ (cubic meters) of water per annum into the Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS), from which Rand Water

draws water to supply its customers. The six months planned maintenance of the tunnel will result with only 700 million m³ of water per annum being transferred in 2024, meaning that there will be a shortfall of 80 million m³ from the normal annual transfer volume. The shortfall will be recovered after the maintenance period.

The Department of Water and Sanitation has assured Rand Water that the impact of the maintenance on the overall IVRS will be insignificant considering that dams in the IVRS such as the Sterkfontein Dam and others are full.

The standard operating rule is that Sterkfontein Dam releases water to the Vaal Dam when the Vaal Dam reaches a minimum operating level of **18%**. The Department of Water and Sanitation analysis indicates that this is unlikely to occur in 2024. However, in the unlikely probability that the Vaal Dam drops to the minimum levels, there will be enough water to release to the Vaal Dam from Sterkfontein Dam.

Rand Water customers should not panic but should intensify their water conservation mechanisms and campaigns to curb the ongoing high consumption. This will ensure that the **Lesotho Highlands Tunnel** maintenance is implemented successfully with little to no disruptions to water provision.

Rand Water will update its customers continuously during the Lesotho Highlands Tunnel maintenance period.

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