

THOUSANDS OF HOMES AFFECTED

# Families left high and dry without water

GUGU MBONAMBI,  
YUSUF MOOLLA & LATOYA NEWMAN

**H**UNDREDS OF thousands of residents in the north of Durban have been without water for six days – and their misery will not end soon. They could be without water for a further three days.

Although water has been restored in some areas, residents in other areas stood for hours in snaking queues waiting for municipal water tankers yesterday.

Many said they had not flushed their toilets or had a proper bath since the weekend, when a seven-hour power outage on Saturday affected operations at a major reservoir.

Phoenix, north of Durban, was one of the worst hit areas. Other areas still without water yesterday included Ntuzuma, Amaoti, Redhill, Inanda and KwaMashu.

Those worst affected by the water crisis were mothers with infants and those caring for sick relatives.

Phoenix residents said taps had been fitted to fire hydrants in some areas so they could collect water.

Shantha Singh, 46, who lives with five relatives, including her 75-year-old father who is ill, said

she had been standing at the roadside for more than five hours, waiting for a water tanker.

"Nobody from the municipality is telling us when the water will return and the water tankers go past our road and are not stopping.

"My father is ill and his medication causes him to visit the toilet often. We don't have water to flush the toilet. It is unhygienic and really unfair," she said.

Amisha Mothilal, 52, said she had been unable to cook, had no ablution facilities and her washing had piled up over three days.

"The water tanks only come once a day and we get about two buckets and two basins of water. That is not enough," she said.

Ntuzuma residents were also frustrated by the water shortages.

They said the situation had been aggravated because it was the festive season and most residents had relatives visiting for the holidays.

Ward councillor David Mabilela said the area had been without water for a week.

"Although tankers are bringing water at regular intervals throughout the day, it is still not enough."

He said the tanker drivers often confused areas and delivered water meant for Ntuzuma elsewhere.



Phoenix resident Zainab Khan collects water from a tap connected to a fire hydrant, which she says was fitted by the municipality because of ongoing water shortages. Residents of Phoenix and neighbouring areas have been without water for six days. PICTURE: ZANELE ZULU

"The people involved in rectifying the problem are working non-stop and I have been in talks with several municipal department heads and supervisors on the matter, but a solution needs to be found soon," he said.

Neil Macleod, the eThekweni water and sanitation head, said yesterday that four reservoirs were empty and 16 were gradually filling up.

"We are working on the problem and water tankers have been sent to all the affected areas," he said.

Umgeni Water spokesman Shami Harichunder said although reservoir 3 was about 75 percent full, residents could still be without water for up to three more days.

"We do acknowledge the fact that eThekweni has dealt with the root of the problem, enabling us to

start pumping water into the reservoirs, but it could take up to three days for the water to be restored in all the affected areas," he said.

Water was restored to Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital, in Phoenix, on Wednesday night.

Other affected areas which gradually have been receiving water since Monday include Castlehill, Hilldale, Mount Edgecombe Estate and Country Club, Avoca Hills and surrounding areas.

Sipho Khuzwayo, head of the municipality's infrastructure committee, said some people had regained access to water yesterday but the water pressure was still low.

"We have set up a management team to monitor the situation. We are using about 70 water tanks.

"All ward councillors have been

instructed to contact the call centre regularly to update the team," he said.

Phoenix ward councillor Patrick Pillay said areas serviced by Phoenix reservoir 4 were without water.

"This reservoir services about 15 000 homes. At an average of about five people per home, you are looking at a lot of people affected," he said.

Minority Front leader Amichand Rajbansi, who visited affected residents yesterday, said he was concerned about the reservoir infrastructure in the area.

"We need an immediate investigation into the state of these pumps and their working condition.

"It is time new equipment was installed," he said.