

Employment and Labour on most Compensation Fund claims for contracting Coronavirus COVID-19 at work are from women

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Women are the most affected with contracting COVID-19 at work, Compensation Fund claims reveal

Women seem to be bearing the biggest brunt of contracting COVID-19 at work.

This is according to the claims lodged with the Compensation Fund which indicate that, more than 80 percent of the cases received so far involve women and this is consistent in all provinces.

As the coronavirus continues to make its devastating presence felt, the Department of Employment and Labour finds itself at the centre of not only having to support workers through relief payments, but also now has to deal with the ever-rising number of claims as people get sick at work.

The Compensation Fund has received a total of 941 claims to date with the highest number coming from the Western Cape that has recorded 657 claims. Of that total, 533 are women; The Fund has accepted liability for 356, repudiated 69 and 233 are pending adjudication. In the Eastern Cape, 99 claimants are women out of a total of 127 claims received. The Fund has accepted liability for 26 while 3 have been repudiated and 98 await adjudication.

Kwa-Zulu Natal has seen 98 claims of which 67 have been accepted, 5 repudiated and 26 await adjudication. The total number of women who are affected in that province is 92. Gauteng province has recorded 54 claims of which 46 affect women, 31 have been accepted, 7 repudiated and 16 are pending adjudication. Limpopo and North West have recorded two claims each with one accepted in Limpopo, one repudiated and both claimants are women while in North West one claimant is a woman.

Mpumalanga has one case which has been accepted and again, a woman is a claimant. To date, the Fund has paid R202 172.35 in medical aid costs.

Other claims have been received through Rand Mutual which has recorded 474 claims while Federated Employers have 20 claims. This means that in total, 1435 claims have been received.

"We are aware that our frontline workers like nurses and other medical staff have been affected by the pandemic. We will like to send the appeal for employers to ensure that workers are adequately protected and are given the necessary protective gear to do their jobs. Our figures show that most affected employees are nurses who are paying the ultimate price so that we get a second chance and survive the pandemic," said Minister Thulas Nxesi.

The Minister add that Inspection and Enforcement Services of the department have upped their in loco inspections to ensure that workers are protected and that the letter and spirit of the Covid-19 safety regulations are followed.

"Unfortunately, we continue to see low levels of compliance with compliance rates hovering at 57% for the private sector and 47%

for the public sector.

Since the start of the lockdown, we have served 385 prohibition notices and overall, 2475 notices were served,” said Minister Nxesi who added that all employers have a duty of care to their employees and had a responsibility for their safety.

“Equally, workers should refuse to work under dangerous conditions. Just this week, a company that flouted labour laws and did not adhere to lockdown regulations was found guilty and fined. It was the workers in that company who blew the whistle and both employer and employee have a responsibility for health and safety, albeit with differing roles,” said Minister Nxesi.

The public sector has been served with a total of 88 prohibitions (shutdown), 363 contraventions and 87 improvement notices while the private sector has seen 45 prohibitions, 339 improvement notices and 1210 contraventions.

For media enquiries contact:

Teboho Thejane

Departmental Spokesperson

Cell: 082 697 0694

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