



Another Blue Drop status for Msunduzi Municipality

A little over two years ago the Msunduzi Municipality was told by the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) that even though their water was safe to drink, the municipality, however, still needed to “expand its water distributing network and develop a water safety plan to ensure the best drinking water”.

The municipality heeded the call and a year later in 2011 it received its first Blue Drop status and in 2012 received their second consecutive Blue Drop status. By receiving a blue drop award Msunduzi Municipality’s water was thoroughly inspected as the Blue Drop assessors run various assessments ranging from drinking water asset management, to quality management, and a minimum of 95% needs to be achieved before a municipality can be granted Blue Drop status.

The mayor of the municipality, Councillor Chris Ndlela, says achieving Blue Drop status had its challenges and required the municipality to assess not only its strengths, but also its weaknesses. “We needed to firstly determine our strengths and weakness as a water service authority in relation to the blue drop criteria. Once these were determined we analysed the information and placed set targets and allocated resources with time frames in order to achieve these set targets. It should be noted that since blue drop awards excellence, even our strengths have to be benchmarked and adjusted accordingly. This required major cohesion and dedication across several business units within the municipality.”

Ndlela says achieving this height of success was a team effort from his municipality, but also gave special credit to the Msunduzi

Water Operations Department for working tirelessly around the clock to ensure that the municipality’s water makes the grade. He hails the department for maintaining a high degree of professionalism during its daily operations and making sure that demand meets supply in as far as producing enough clean and safe water for their constituency and visitors of the city. “Credit must be given to the entire Msunduzi Water Operations Department for continually ensuring that all our daily technical operations do not affect water quality whilst simultaneously ensuring that all our residents and visitors have the necessary quantity of water. In delivering quantity we are ensuring quality is maintained.

“The sampling of 77 points on a fortnightly basis within the Msunduzi catchment is a mammoth and vital task that is undertaken by our environment health unit that further monitors and controls the risk register.”

The Mayor says one of the biggest challenges that they had to address urgently in the pursuit of a Blue Drop status was the “water safety plan” that was raised by DWA. So mammoth was the task, the municipality had to engage with external stakeholders and various consultants in order to devise a safety plan.

“From our internal SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, one of our major weaknesses was the water safety planning process and risk assessment. To this end, Msunduzi then engaged a professional service provider, Emanti Management, to assist with identifying the risks and to further recommend control and mitigation measures. The recommendations from Emanti were then integrated with Umgeni Water to provide a complete Water Safety Planning Process.” Ndlela said.



His Worship, the Mayor of Msunduzi Municipality, Cllr Chris Ndlela

Not one to rest on his laurels or the success of his municipality, Ndlela says his municipality is embarking on a number of major water infrastructure upgrade projects which in turn will assist the municipality to better mitigate water losses, and improve the overall management of water in the municipality. “We are currently on Phase three of the R240 million non-revenue water reduction project. This project is basically to ensure that our water losses are reduced whilst simultaneously improving revenue and will entail asset replacement, pressure management and water metering improvements. We are further constructing a new 20 ml reservoir in Copesville at a cost of R32 million and another new 20 MI reservoir for the Masons area is currently in its final stages of design.”

These water projects will surely ensure that Mayor Ndlela’s goal of continuous water improvement is reached. “Whilst we at Msunduzi acknowledge that we have achieved our drinking water quality summa-cum-laude for two consecutive years, the intention is still to continuously improve our drinking water quality standards” concludes Ndlela. 