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STATEMENT BY THE CITY MANAGER OF JOHANNESBURG ON THE GAS EXPLOSION IN JOHANNESBURG

26 JULY 2023

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentleman

Today, marks seven (7) days since the gas explosion that occurred on Lilian Ngoyi Street (formerly Bree Street).

Seven days on, we have made great strides in our emergency response and recovery of services in the area. Our Emergency Management Services (EMS) have executed exceptionally well in their duties from the very first responders to the explosion on the day.

The deployment of response personnel from the fire, health and police services was rapid, well-coordinated and effective. Within a short space of time, all three spheres of government had a fully operational and functional Joint-Operations Centre (JOC) at Mary Fitzgerald Square, from where our efforts to isolate the incident site, identify the injured and fatalities as well as to deploy responders to the incident were coordinated.

As the head of the technical team, I am pleased to inform the residents of the City that in this particular incident our systems have worked and have done so successfully. We have also identified gaps where they may exist and as part of the lessons learnt, several processes will be reviewed to assist us improve our offering for any future occurrences.

I wish to commend each and every single member of the Emergency Management Services, JMPD, SAPS and the engineers and experts that have been party to our response effort for their dedication and commitment over the last seven days.

Disaster Management Response

As a City, we have now commenced processes of compiling a report to the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PMDC) through Disaster Management Centre in order to commence with the necessary legislated processes to declare the explosion a Local State of Disaster.

The declaration of the disaster is critical in order to allow us to assess the impact of the explosion on infrastructure and to cost the rehabilitation work required. To classify the disaster accordingly in line with the Act and to declare the disaster accordingly once the outlined processes have been concluded.

We have mandated the Disaster Management Centre to commence with the processes and to finalize a report for submission to the PDMC within the next seven (7) days.

Recovery

We are pleased to announce that yesterday afternoon, City Power has successfully restored power to the area. These include Bank City, Pritchard, west of Loveday, Jeppe, West, Diagonal, Sauer, Harrisson, President, Simmonds Streets and all the surrounding areas west of Bree Street, including Wanderer's Taxi Rank.

There has also been a restoration of feeder cables under the collapsed road surface on Lilian Ngoyi Street and the entire street is currently energized.

Yesterday evening, **Johannesburg Water has also concluded repair work to two broken sewer connections at Bree and Loveday Streets and at Bree and Von Brandis Streets. This has enabled the reconnection of sewer services to the area and as of today, we are confident all residents in the area should be reconnected and having access to regular sewer services.**

The damaged water main along Bree and Joubert Streets has been repaired and water restored to the affected block. The damaged water main on Bree and Loveday Streets

was repaired but experienced leaks due to alignment issues. Our teams from Johannesburg Water are on site and we expect the repair work to be completed this afternoon.

As a City, it has been of paramount importance to us to restore services to residents in the area as a matter of urgency and we are pleased to have achieved this milestone. We wish to thank the residents of the area for their patience and consideration and we will continue to monitor the area for any disruptions that may occur as a result of the work still to be undertaken.

As you are aware, investigations are still inconclusive on the cause of the explosion and what may have ignited the gas or the source of the gas in the underground tunnels. We continue to receive regular updates from the experts on site and are concurrently pushing to restore services and to prepare for the rehabilitation work of the road and underground tunnels.

We are now beginning our planning for the rehabilitation and repair work of the road surface and underground service tunnels in Lilian Ngoyi Street. We have established a team of engineers from the various entities of the City to beginning planning and scoping of the work we will need to undertake.

It is evident to us that in rehabilitating the road surface and underground tunnels, we will have to implement new standards of how we manage and lay out underground service lines and connections. Amongst the anomalies currently, we have gas pipelines running parallel to water lines. This is not ideal and as we prepare to restore Bree Street, our work will seek to set the standard of what should be the most suited, safe and appropriate layout of services infrastructure in a City like ours.

We have also assigned the Group Chief Financial Officer (GFCO) to oversee a team of persons from the various teams to manage and oversee any procurement that must be undertaken to facilitate our work in response to the disaster. The mandate is to ensure that we comply fully with legislated procurement rules and audit as we procure services for the response effort.

We will be preparing a report to share with the Executive of the City and Council on the explosion, response and recovery.

At this stage, we remain confident that we are on the right path in our efforts to respond and recover from the incident and will once more implore the public to bear with us and to give us space to do all we must for the successful recovery of the site and services.

Ends

Issued by the City of Johannesburg
Group Communication & Marketing Department

For all media queries, send an email to mediaqueries@joburg.org.za