

MEDIA STATEMENT

TO: All Media

ATT: News Editors, Health Reporters

For immediate release

Sunday, 14 June 2020

ATTACKS ON EMS WILL ROB COMMUNITIES OF ACCESS TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

When Emergency Medical Services (EMS) fail to respond to a life-threatening call involving your loved one because they fear for their own lives who will you blame?

This is the question the Gauteng Department of Health has been forced to ask society following sustained attacks on paramedics when they try to respond to emergencies.

In yet another incident, our team from Tshepo Themba base had their ambulance broken into and a GPS stolen in the early hours of this morning, around 04:00. The incident happened as the team was responding to a call at Maseko Street, Zola 2 in Soweto. Unfortunately the patient was declared dead on arrival. The team noticed the robbery while getting the declaration book in the vehicle to record the death. A case has since been opened at Jabulani Police Station.

On Wednesday night (10 June) another EMS crew which was responding to an incident of a burned patient was attacked. The team on their way stopped to assess another incident of a fire outbreak at Mary Me informal settlement in Soshanguve.

It is alleged that community members set a shack on fire to punish its occupants, whom they accused of committing crime in the area. When EMS responded to the fire, crew members were pelted with stones by the community to stop them from accessing the burning property. The EMS personnel were not injured. The matter was reported to the local police station, where a case was opened (case number: 120/6/20).

Early this year in March an EMS crew was robbed of their belongings at gun point in Winterveld, North of Pretoria while responding to an emergency call.

The situation is getting out of hand and requires community members to rise in defense of the "green angels" - as EMS crews are fondly called.

The Department would like to plead with community members not to interfere, intimidate, rob, or attack paramedics as they attend to emergencies.

Attacking EMS personnel will have dire consequences for communities as our crews will end up not being able to respond to emergencies when called by the very same communities.

The criminals stay within communities. We call on all members of society to work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that these criminals are brought to book. It will be a sad day when people in need of emergency medical care cannot be assisted because society did nothing to stop attacks on EMS.

Ends/

Issued by the Department of Health

Media enquiries can be directed to Mr Philani Mhlungu, Media Liaison Officer: MEC for Health on 060 961 2627 or Philani.Mhlungu@gauteng.gov.za and

Mr Motalatale Modiba, Chief Director: Communication on 064 803 0808 or Motalatale.Modiba@gauteng.gov.za or to the central email mediaenquiries@gauteng.gov.za.

For media releases, speeches and news visit the Gauteng Department of Health's portal at www.gauteng.gov.za

*Download Mpilo App free on the Apple's App Store and Google Play Store or by using USSD by dialing *134*227# for regular updates and latest developments on Covid-19 including self-screening should you develop symptoms.