

Keeping the lights on



Durban is currently experiencing blazing summer conditions, which hikes up the demand for electricity to keep our fans and air conditioners on. EThekweni Municipality's Electricity Unit is responsible for this. Romita Hanuman profiles the Unit, outlines their challenges, successes and what to look out for if you suspect cable theft.

What we do and how we do it



Sandile Maphumulo
Head: Electricity Unit

The Head of Electricity, Sandile Maphumulo explained the work done by his team. EThekweni Electricity supplies more than 640 000 customers in an area covering nearly 2 000 square kilometres. This encompasses the area of the eThekweni Metropolitan Region and some adjacent areas. The eThekweni Municipality is proud of all service units, and Electricity is no exception.

Here are a few achievements of the Unit:

- The Unit is a leader in compliance to the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) and the National Rationalisation Standards (NRS) which are essentially national guidelines based on international best practice.
- Electricity Supply Industry Excellence Award 2000 – Best Municipal Electricity Distributor obtained from ESI Africa
- KZN Centre Significant Project Award – Durban's Landfill Gas to Electricity GDM Project obtained by South African Institute of Electrical Engineering (SAIEE)
- Successful project in partnership with Durban Solid Waste at Bisasar Landfill Site: about 8 megawatts (worth about R1million) of electricity per month is generated through this project.
- 333 610 (70%) households have been connected to electricity
- 92 000 eThekweni residents receive free 65kwh of electricity
- 28 000 solar water heaters have been installed in homes of previously disadvantaged households



DID YOU KNOW?

Where electricity comes from

Electricity for the main supply to the Metro Region is purchased at 275 000 Volts from Eskom at three in-feed points. EThekweni Electricity also purchases electricity from Eskom for Winkelspruit, Mpumalanga and Megabank. From these points electricity is transmitted and distributed for use by the full spectrum of customers ranging from the large industrial and commercial sector to the residential communities. EThekweni Electricity Unit purchases just over 5% of the total energy generated by Eskom. EThekweni Electricity Unit operates under the Electricity Regulation Act, 2006. Its policies are determined by the Metropolitan Council of Durban and the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA).

Zero tolerance on cable theft

South Africa is facing a major problem with copper theft and has a negative impact on all citizens. The estimated loss due to copper theft is approximately R5billion per year with eThekweni Electricity contributing R60million to that loss. It has an impact on the City's communication network, electricity supply and railway and traffic services.

What is cable theft?

This is when people steal copper cable and sell it to scrap dealers for money. Copper cable holds a high monetary value and can be sold for R65-R70 per kilogram. The scrap metals business has become very lucrative with unscrupulous dealers simply buying copper with no questions asked. The stolen copper is then exported to other

countries like China and India and the same copper is then procured by the country it has been stolen from. Last year a joint operation was conducted in conjunction with National and Provincial SAPS. Three dealers were fined for being in possession of bare copper cables and another was found with 1278kg of copper cable and buzz bars.

Cable Theft Task Team

The Electricity unit recognised the need to establish a task team that is dedicated to fighting the scourge of cable theft. The task team was established in 2009 and has since been conducting investigations into cable theft, apprehending suspects and confiscating stolen copper cable. The SAPS arrests suspects and are then taken to court where the case is heard and suspects are either sentenced or released, depending on the merit of the case.

In the last year the task team has discovered an astounding 2056 kilograms of stolen cable.

Here's what to look out for:

- Criminals posing as contractors working for eThekweni Electricity, removing cables illegally
- A substantial amount of theft takes place late at night or very early in the morning so if you see "contractors" removing cable at these odd times, regard it as suspicious
- Individuals walking around with cutting tools
- People removing overhead cables without a job card from eThekweni Municipality
- Suspicious vehicles like bakkies, trucks and minibuses with occupants pretending to conduct electrical work
- No signage on the vehicle
- Warning boards: make sure you query by calling the Electricity Call Centre.



Stolen copper cables recovered by the cable theft task team



TIPS

- Do not approach suspects
- Monitor the movements and details of people and vehicles, example what they are wearing, registration and description of vehicles etc
- Report suspicious activity to Electricity's call centre or the South African Police Services.

ELECTRICITY CALL CENTRE
080 13 13 111
CABLE THEFT HOTLINE
031 311 9611

Celebrating 20 years of freedom and democracy