

BLITZ INSPECTIONS WRITE-UP



Deputy Ministers Lead High-Impact Enforcement Blitz in Newcastle Textile Sector

A multi-disciplinary enforcement operation led by Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour Jomo Sibiya, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Njabulo Nzuza and Deputy Minister of Police Dr Polly Boshielo uncovered widespread labour, immigration and occupational health and safety violations during a high-impact blitz inspection conducted in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, on 4 June 2026.



employment & labour

Department:
Employment and Labour
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The joint operation formed part of government's ongoing efforts to combat labour exploitation, strengthen compliance with labour legislation and address the employment of undocumented foreign nationals in high-risk sectors of the economy. The inspection targeted two clothing manufacturers, Wu Hui Workers Primary Co-Operative Limited and Shen Da Trading, operating from the same premises at 9 Bell Street in the Riverside Industrial Area. The factories collectively employ 47 workers.

A team comprising 11 officials from the Department of Employment and Labour, seven officials from the Department of Home Affairs, eight members of the SAPS Tactical Response Team (TRT), as well as SAPS Public Order Policing (POP) officials, participated in the operation.

Non-compliance at extreme levels

Inspectors found both companies to be non-compliant with several pieces of labour legislation. Preliminary findings revealed that workers were being paid below the prescribed National Minimum Wage, with underpayments exceeding R950 000. Shen Da Trading was found to have underpaid workers by approximately R733 890, while underpayments at Wu Hui Workers Primary Co-Operative Limited amounted to R216 880. The inspection further uncovered overtime underpayments exceeding R115 000, while administrative fines amounting to R42 300 were imposed for National Minimum Wage Act contraventions.



Labour inspectors indicated that the total amount owed to workers may increase as assessments continue for employees who were not present during the inspection.

The operation also exposed serious workplace safety concerns, failures to comply with social security legislation and the employment of undocumented foreign nationals. Enforcement action was taken immediately against both employers, including the issuing of compliance orders, contravention notices and prohibition notices.

The findings highlight the importance of coordinated enforcement efforts between government departments in protecting vulnerable workers, promoting decent work and ensuring that employers comply with South African labour and immigration laws.

Labour, immigration, and municipal laws contravened

The operation also uncovered serious occupational health and safety concerns, including unsafe electrical installations, inadequate fire prevention measures, poor machine safeguarding, insufficient health and safety training, and failures to conduct risk assessments. Contravention notices and prohibition notices were issued against both employers, while a prohibition notice was also served on Newcastle Municipality directing the discontinuation of electricity supply to the premises due to unsafe electrical installations.

Further investigations revealed that both companies had failed to provide proof of registration with the Compensation Fund and the Unemployment Insurance Fund, resulting in compliance orders being issued.

In a significant immigration enforcement outcome, 22 undocumented foreign nationals were arrested for contravening the Immigration Act, while one Taiwanese employer was arrested for allegedly employing undocumented workers.

The findings point to a pattern of labour exploitation, unsafe working conditions and non-compliance with employment and immigration legislation within the clothing manufacturing sector. Follow-up inspections will be conducted to monitor compliance with enforcement notices and orders issued during the operation.



Department to relentlessly pursue compliance

The Department of Employment and Labour will conduct follow-up inspections within 60 days to monitor compliance with notices and orders issued during the operation. Non-compliance may result in further enforcement action, including prosecution where appropriate. The Department will also engage with SAPS management regarding operational challenges encountered during the processing of immigration-related arrests, while continuing to prioritise high-impact inspections within the Newcastle clothing manufacturing sector. The operation demonstrates government's commitment to protecting workers' rights, eliminating labour exploitation, addressing undocumented labour and ensuring safe and compliant workplaces across South Africa.

