



Deputy Minister Sibiya calls for partnership-driven compliance in the petroleum sector

Employment and Labour Deputy Minister, Honourable Jomo Sibiya, has called on employers in the petroleum sector to work with government, organised labour and bargaining councils to strengthen compliance, protect workers and support sustainable business growth.

The Deputy Minister delivered the keynote address at the Petroleum Industries Employers' Breakfast Session hosted by the Department of Employment and Labour's Inspection and Enforcement Services at Birchwood Hotel on 29 July 2026.

The engagement brought together employers, organised business, organised labour, bargaining councils, the Department of Home Affairs, Rand Mutual Assurance, the Compensation Fund, the Unemployment Insurance Fund and officials from the Department of Employment and Labour.

Deputy Minister Sibiya responded directly to concerns raised by employers during the question-and-answer session, including challenges in accessing departmental services, delays caused by information technology systems, inspection procedures and allegations of unethical conduct by inspectors.

He acknowledged the difficulties experienced by some employers when attempting to obtain assistance from the Department and apologised for instances where businesses had struggled to access services or had resorted to appointing consultants.

The Deputy Minister committed the Department to improving its accessibility and addressing internal systems and service-delivery shortcomings.

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He emphasised that employers should not have to plead for assistance from government and said the Department had a responsibility to guide businesses in understanding and complying with employment legislation.

Deputy Minister Sibiya described the petroleum sector as a strategic part of the South African economy, noting that it enables the movement of people and goods and supports industrial and agricultural activity.

The industry supplies fuel to more than 12 million vehicles and employs more than 140,000 people nationally, with Gauteng accounting for approximately one-third of petrol-station employment. He said the sector's economic importance must be matched by a strong commitment to labour-law compliance.

The Deputy Minister stressed that the Department's responsibility was not limited to protecting workers but also included supporting businesses to grow, expand and create employment.

He said government must maintain a balance in which businesses are able to operate profitably while workers receive fair wages, social protection and safe working conditions.

The Department would therefore continue combining employer education and advocacy with inspection and enforcement. Deputy Minister Sibiya described this as a "carrot-and-stick" approach: employers willing to correct shortcomings would receive guidance and reasonable assistance, while persistent or serious violations would result in enforcement action.

Gauteng Provincial Chief Inspector, Mr Mbongeni Tshabalala, presented the findings of inspections conducted in the petroleum and filling-station sector since April 2026 in the province.

Of the 682 occupational health and safety inspections conducted, 308 employers, or 45%, were compliant, while 374 employers, or 55%, were non-compliant. The inspections resulted in 361 contravention notices, 92 improvement notices and 17 prohibition notices. Key concerns included inadequate risk assessments, unsafe LPG-cylinder storage, electrical installations, pressure equipment and the management of hazardous chemical agents.

The findings also identified employers who had not registered with the Compensation Fund or Rand Mutual Assurance and high levels of non-compliance with monthly Unemployment Insurance Fund employee declarations.

Deputy Minister Sibiya said these findings should form the beginning of a longer partnership rather than a once-off enforcement exercise. He called for the sector to work towards higher levels of voluntary compliance and greater self-regulation through cooperation with bargaining councils and the Department.

Looking to the future, Deputy Minister Sibiya warned that electric and hybrid vehicles, digital diagnostics and technological changes would transform the skills required in the petroleum and motor industries.

He called on employers to invest in apprenticeships, learnerships and training beyond the minimum legal requirements and encouraged trade unions to champion skills development alongside wages and working conditions.

"A skill is a wage that cannot be retrenched." Deputy Minister Jomo Sibiya

The Deputy Minister concluded by calling for a culture of compliance across government, business and society and reaffirmed the Department's commitment to working with employers and workers to advance decent work. The Department will continue with employer education, stakeholder engagements and inspections aimed at protecting workers, supporting responsible businesses and improving compliance throughout the petroleum sector.

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