

City under strain- 90% of Lenasia residents don't pay for electricity

It has been confirmed that a staggering 90% of electricity users in Lenasia are not paying for their power, with the majority of these customers stealing electricity through meter bypassing, tampering, or illegal reconnections. According to City Power's Department of Public Relations and Communication General Manager, Isaac Mangena, this has resulted in massive revenue losses, with the Lenasia Service Delivery Centre alone owed close to R1 billion by non-paying customers. The city's infrastructure is also feeling the strain, with frequent power outages and equipment damage caused by the excessive load. Mangena told the Lenasia Rising Sun that City Power lost over R100 million in non-technical losses in the previous financial year, with R600,000 per month lost due to illegal electricity usage in Lenasia. Additionally, 10 pole-mounted transformers and five mini substations were damaged due to illegal connections, costing over R10 million to replace.



The challenge is compounded by the presence of over 300 informal settlements in Johannesburg, with Lenasia being one of the areas with a high number of squatter camps. Despite efforts to electrify informal settlements, some areas cannot be formalised due to environmental factors, leading to continued illegal connections.

However, City Power is taking steps to address the issue. The city has adopted a multi-pronged strategy, including:

- Regular cut-off operations targeting non-vending customers, meter bypasses, and unauthorised connections
 - Meter audits and penalties for tampering
 - A normalisation programme to ensure every customer has a fully functioning meter
 - Community engagement and imbizos to educate residents about paying for services
 - Increased security resources to monitor high-risk areas
- Since July, City Power has arrested close to 300 people for electricity theft and illegal reconnections. The city is also working with the Department of Human Settlements and Housing to address the challenge of informal settlements.

City Power urges residents to report illegal connections or meter tampering to 0800 002 587. With community participation, the city hopes to reduce prolonged outages and ensure the sustainability of its operations.



Various departments within SAPS addressed the Thembelihle's community.

Lenasia SAPS warns against police extortion: Community speaks out

To strengthen community-police relations, the Lenasia SAPS held an engagement meeting with residents of Thembelihle informal settlement on Saturday, May 25. The meeting, attended by various police ranks, the Provincial Department of Community Safety, Sector Four Community Police Forum (CPF), and Lenasia Crime Prevention Wardens, aimed to discuss crime-related issues affecting the area.

During the meeting, community members raised concerns about police extortion, alleging that police officers frequently visit tuck shops, demanding money from owners. "We see the police at tuck shops often," said a community member. "When we approach the shop owners for donations, they say, 'If it's not the community, it's the police.'" This suggests a disturbing trend of police officers exploiting business owners for personal gain.

The Lenasia SAPS condemned such behaviour, urging the community to report any instances of extortion. "Report extortion of money by police officers, and we will deal with them," warned the police. This commitment to accountability is a step in the right direction, reassuring the community that

their concerns will be taken seriously.

The meeting also addressed the issue of long-standing cases lacking updates. The police promised to follow up on cases brought to their attention, and the provincial department provided a contact number (063 002 3542) for the community to report case complaints and follow-ups.

The meeting went beyond addressing crime, focusing on educating the community about the role of CPFs and the importance of collaboration. The police warned against drug dealing, highlighting a recent incident where a female suspect ingested drugs to evade arrest, resulting in her hospitalisation.

To encourage community participation, the police announced plans to introduce a suggestion box, allowing residents to provide anonymous tips and suggestions to help expose criminals. This initiative aims to foster a sense of ownership and cooperation between the community and the police.

As the Lenasia SAPS works to build trust and tackle crime, the community's active participation will be crucial in shaping a safer and more secure environment for all.

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