

# Fuel supply to improve this week, says Shell

Shell SA said yesterday that it expected fuel availability at its Gauteng service stations to improve this week.

Certain areas of Gauteng experienced fuel shortages after Shell's Alberton fuel depot was shut down earlier this month for safety reasons following a fuel leak at the site.

"While the leak was immediately isolated, the depot remained closed until it was deemed safe to resume operations," Shell spokesman Elton Fortuin said yesterday.

The fuel delivery backlog as a result of the problems at the Alberton depot has heightened the possibility of fuel shortages in other areas such as Mpumalanga and Free State as well.

The company yesterday said the Alberton fuel depot became fully operational this past weekend, with normal fuel delivery services commencing on Saturday.

"We still have a significant delivery backlog to clear and only expect fuel availability to improve at our Gauteng retail service stations during the course of this week. We regret the inconvenience caused to our retailers and the public," Fortuin said.

Meanwhile, an outage at Sapref's single-buoy mooring, a loading buoy anchored offshore, could worsen the fuel shortages.

## Contingency measures activated

The buoy serves as a mooring and interconnection point for tankers loading or offloading gas or liquid products.

The Durban-based Sapref refinery is the biggest crude oil refinery in southern Africa, with 35% of SA's refining capacity.

"We have activated our contingency measures and are monitoring closely the potential impact the single-buoy mooring outage could have on our ability to supply fuel. We are also holding daily planning meetings to assess stock levels and prioritise fuel deliveries to ensure we minimise any supply disruptions during this period," Fortuin said.

Sapref said yesterday the Durban single-buoy mooring was taken out of service for unplanned repairs on Tuesday last week.

"Good progress has been made and it is expected that the repairs will be completed in a number of days, weather permitting," Sapref spokeswoman Cindy Govender said yesterday.

Gauteng motorists recently experienced a spate of fuel shortages, mainly because of planned and unplanned maintenance shutdowns at some of the country's refineries.

Other than petrol and diesel, the shutdowns led to a shortage of liquefied petroleum gas and bitumen. The shortages exposed the inadequacy of SA's existing import facilities.

The liquefied petroleum gas shortages affected, among others, the manufacturing, automotive and hospitality sectors, while bitumen is used to produce asphalt, used in road construction.

Source: *Business Day* via I-Net Bridge

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