

Everything in place and ready for Election Day 2019

07 May 2019

Tshwane (National Results Operations Centre) – The Electoral Commission calls on every registered voter to have their say by casting their votes tomorrow in South Africa’s sixth national and provincial elections.

The country’s 22 924 voting stations are all poised and ready to open at 7am tomorrow to welcome voters. They will remain open until 9pm when counting is scheduled to begin. However, voting will continue after 9pm where voters are waiting in the queue.

Voters are reminded of the following key information regarding voting:

1. They must be registered to vote. Voters can SMS their ID to 32810 or call 0800 11 8000 to check on their registration and voting station details. The Contact Centre will be open between 7am and 9pm to assist voters with any queries.

Labour Unions

2. They must take a valid ID document which is either a green barcoded ID book, a smartcard ID or a valid temporary ID certificate. Branches of the Department of Home Affairs will be open tomorrow should voters urgently need a temporary ID certificate.
3. Voters whose addresses are not reflected on the voters’ roll will be required to provide their address prior to voting. Proof of address is not required.
4. If voters are voting in a voting station in their province they will be handed two ballot papers – one for the national election and one for the provincial election.
5. Voters should ensure these ballot papers are stamped at the back by an election official.
6. Voters then cast their ballots and place their marked ballot papers into a ballot box.
7. Voters are reminded that the secrecy of the vote is protected by law and it is an offence to take a photograph of a marked ballot.

The past two days of special voting have helped to iron out any teething problems and ensure everything is in place and ready for tomorrow’s Election Day. Among the challenges encountered yesterday and today included the following incidents:

1. Security of elections:

The Electoral Commission is encouraged to note a significant decline in community protests this week. In those instances where protest action did continue the South African Police Service were very quick to intervene to restore calm. A minimum of two police officers will be deployed to each voting station and the SAPS will remain on high alert in high risk areas to ensure no disruptions to the elections. Citizens are reminded that any disruptions to elections constitute a criminal offence.

In one apparent crime-related incident yesterday a group of knife-wielding men confronted a group of election officials conducting home visits in Giyani, Limpopo and confiscated 93 unused provincial ballot papers which they destroyed. Fortunately no-one was injured and the cast ballots (7) were secured and not affected. The SAPS were quick to respond and two suspects have been arrested and are now in police custody.

Accidents:

Two vehicle accidents involving election staff were reported over the past two days but fortunately only minor injuries were sustained.

2. Processes not followed

The Electoral Commission is investigating reports of instances of the double envelope system not being used in some special voting yesterday as well as some ballot papers which may not have been stamped at the back. The stamping of ballot papers immediately prior to them being issued to voters is an important security measure.

These incidents were also reported to the Party Liaison Committee this morning which has made recommendations to the Commission on these cases – including to accept the ballots where their legitimacy can be verified.

The Commission will ultimately make a decision on whether these votes are included in the count or not.

Additional reminders of the importance of stamping ballot papers and of the double envelope system were sent to all Presiding Officers and Deputy Presiding Officers today.

The Electoral Commission also removed a Deputy Presiding Officer from a voting station in Benoni, Ekurhuleni following an investigation into a video showing a party agent assisting with the transfer of special votes. Party agents are not permitted to handle any election material and may only observe and raise objections.

A pack of three unused and unassembled ballot boxes was found on the side of the road in Tzaneen, Limpopo. Investigations showed it was lost in transport by the Area Manager. The person has been suspended pending an internal disciplinary. The ballot boxes were recovered by SAPS and returned to IEC.

The Commission appreciates the vigilance of party agents and voters in monitoring the election process and in bringing to its attention potential problems. This should be done firstly at the voting station through the Presiding Officer and, if not resolved then it should be raised through the existing channels including the party liaison structures.

Providing as much detail of any incident – including where and when it occurred – would significantly speed up the investigation process.

3. Weather:

Some rain was reported yesterday and today in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Fortunately this was not severe enough to affect voting. The Commission is pleased to note that the South African Weather Service is predicting relatively mild and fair weather conditions across the country tomorrow with no severe weather warnings.

UPDATE ON SPECIAL VOTING

The Electoral Commission does not yet have accurate figures for special votes cast over the past two days but indications are this has proceeded well throughout the country.

Additional resources were provided today for home visits in the Eastern Cape which had the highest number of home visits as well as the North West which had reported to be slightly behind schedule last night and the IEC is confident all special votes will be completed today.

Special votes from 113 of the 121 foreign missions which were cast by voters abroad on 27 April 2019 have already been received. The eight outstanding batches of special votes from:

- Algiers, Algeria
- Brussels, Belgium
- Shanghai, China
- Lubumbashi, DRC
- Asmara, Eritrea
- Tokyo, Japan
- Soa Tome, Soa Tome and Principe and
- Caracas, Venezuela0

are en route and we hope to receive them before 9pm tomorrow night.

The special votes cast overseas will be counted at our National Office on Thursday morning in front of party agents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Electoral Commission calls on every South African citizen to celebrate our 25th anniversary of democracy by ensuring tomorrow's elections take place in the spirit of 1994.

Let voting continue peacefully, calmly and without disruption and let us once again show the world that South Africa remains a shining light of democracy in action.

Let's vote Xse!

ISSUED BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Ensuring free and fair elections

For media queries please contact Kate Bapela on 082 600-6386

For media interviews with Electoral Commission officials please email requests to spokesperson@elections.org.za

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