



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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**A City of Johannesburg media statement by
Executive Mayor, Cllr Herman Mashaba**

Note to editors: Please see the revised statement with correct Ward number.

Illegal mining activities lead to road closure

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Due to pavement structural failures the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA), has been forced to urgently close Iridium Street between Randfontein Road and Penny Road in Roodepoort from traffic. Iridium Street is located in Ward 127, within Region C.

Despite the road being old, illegal mining activities in the vicinity have contributed immensely to the deterioration of the road pavement structure. Holes dug by illegal miners have resulted in ponding when it rains and this has undermined the pavement structure of the road. In addition, the structural integrity of the road has been seriously affected and posed serious risk for motorists and other road users. The JRA will endeavour to prioritise the rehabilitation and reconstruction of this road during the 2019/20 financial year.

The road has been closed as of the 29 June 2019. The road closure is necessitated by the need for public safety in general as well as putting the safety of our motorists first in particular. The closure will be in force until June 2020 when the road is repaired. Road users and affected communities will be notified in due course as to when the rehabilitation works will commence.

“The safety of our road users is JRA’s foremost priority. Due to the age of the extent of the failures of the road pavement structure, the continued use of this road leaves the motorists at risk because of imminent collapse”, said the Executive Mayor, Cllr. Herman Mashaba.

Of course, this is not the first time the City has raised serious concerns around the impact of illegal mining on the City.

Our concerns have seemingly fallen on the deaf ears of National government in this respect.

Late last year, the Department of Mineral Resources stated that there was “...no immediate threat to critical infrastructure as has been claimed...”

This is despite the very real and imminent threat faced by residents as a result of illegal mining with the use of explosives near highways, Transnet bulk fuel supply and SASOL gas pipelines travelling across the City.

The views expressed by the Department illustrated the national government's inability to proactively manage this dangerous situation and protect the safety of Johannesburg residents.

Indeed, from as early as October of 2017, the urgency of the matter was raised by Transnet who wrote to me seeking the City's assistance in arresting illegal mining activities which not only threatened infrastructure, but residents' lives as well.

On two occasions, I had written to the Minister of Mineral Resources, Hon. Gwede Mantashe, requesting his support and intervention with regard to illegal mining with the use of explosives near highways, Transnet bulk fuel supply and SASOL gas pipelines.

The Minister chose to turn a blind eye to those requests.

I had also requested that Minister Mantashe instruct his Department to provide us with specific measures, plans and interventions to avert this pending disaster. This was again met with silence.

These efforts followed several other attempts, made in good faith, to engage the former Minister, Mosebenzi Zwane, by writing to him on both 28 November 2017 and 12 February 2018. In my letter dated 28 November 2018, I requested the former Minister's assistance in terms of instructing his Department to provide us with measures and interventions to avert a pending disaster.

This deadline came and went without any communication from the former Minister.

In the interests of inter-governmental relations, I had taken the step of also sending these letters to Minister of COGTA, Hon. Zweli Mkhize, Premier of Gauteng, Hon. David Makhura, MEC of COGTA in Gauteng, Hon. Uhuru Moiloa, and former SAPS Provincial Commissioner, Lt General Deliwe De Lange, in the hopes that they would understand the urgency of this matter and assist in ensuring necessary interventions and measures are put in place to avert this potential disaster.

Once again, dead silence.

It is greatly disappointing that not only has the City's efforts up to date been wholly ignored.

Threats posed by illegal mining activity:

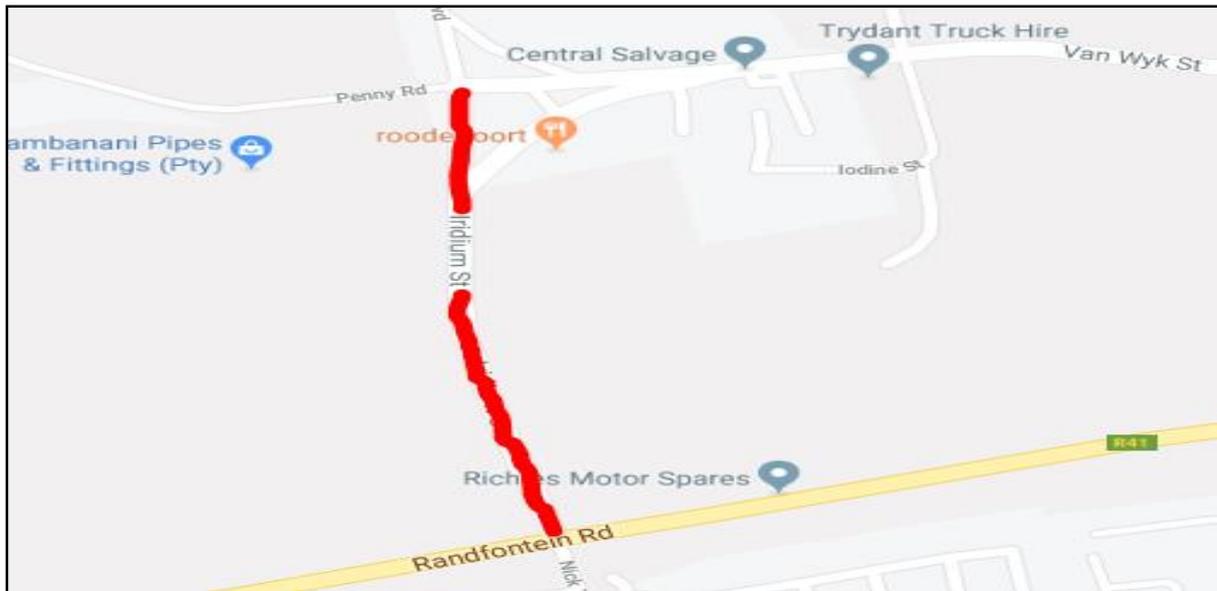
- Near pipelines carrying gas and fuel creates increased risk for neighbouring communities, puts services at risk and is an impending threat to the safety of city employees working along the pipelines and other services within the servitudes;
- Risks contamination of the City's water supply;
- Illegal mining has resulted in tremors, which risks the structural integrity of our roads, adjacent residential communities and businesses (Illegal blasting can create a spark that can ignite a fire capable of incinerating a large radius of up to 300m^{→→2});
- Illegal mining activities have compromised the pillars that support the decommissioned mines, placing additional risk on the physical structure upon which the pipelines rests and the imminent collapse of the mine; and
- Has compromised both Transnet Pipelines and Sasol gas lines.

Of significance is the Nasrec precinct where the pipelines intersects with SASOL gas lines. Investigations have revealed that if illegal mining activity continues within these old mining shafts, the entire FNB Nasrec precinct, including the iconic FNB stadium, could be at risk.

The time has come for national government to do the right thing, take this matter seriously and decisively act to protect our residents.

With respect to the road closure, the following arrangements have been made:

- Traffic detour plan have been put in place to deviate traffic to neighbouring streets like Corllet Avenue, Nick Tommey BLVD and Van Wyk Street.
- Motorists are urged to adhere to traffic guidelines and signage.



I would like to apologise to all road users for any inconvenience that may be caused as a result of these repairs and rehabilitation work.

Cllr Herman Mashaba
Executive Mayor
City of Joburg

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