

Operational wind farms an essential service

South Africa's 22 operational wind farms are considered essential services and will continue contributing to the national grid. However, by implication, the 12 wind farms currently under construction are not classified as essential services and will be part of the lockdown.



Nupoot Wind Farm

“Last week the Eskom Single Buyer Office sent a letter to all operating independent power producers (IPPs) to confirm that the categorisation of essential services only applies to facilities currently in operation,” said Ntombifuthi Ntuli, chief executive officer of the South African Wind Energy Association (Sawea).

The operational wind farms have put strict protocols in place to ensure business continuity while ensuring safety of their employees. Protocols and procedures have also been put in place in line with the Covid-19 Lockdown Regulations and Amendment, as gazetted by the government.

Following consultation with the Department of Energy’s IPP Office, Sawea has confirmed that the 21 days of nationwide lockdown is an event of force majeure under the power purchase agreement (PPA), for wind farm projects in construction. This means that delays, directly related to the lockdown period, will not attract any penalties.

The industry is working to support its beneficiary communities through economic development obligations, by re-directing socio-economic development funds toward Covid-19 response activities, where possible.

Many beneficiary community offices, that are located in rural areas across the country, have become information centres and are working closely with joint committees on municipal and district level to assist during this crisis period. Both closed communication groups and social media platforms are providing official educational material and resources to the communities.

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