

# Property firms allay water fears

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Several prominent listed real estate groups have promised tenants they will have water in the event of Day Zero, when the City of Cape Town is expected to turn off the taps.



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Property groups Growthpoint Properties, Hyprop Investments, Redefine Properties and the Amdec group - which all own or are developing buildings worth hundreds of billions of rand - say they set up water management strategies years ago. All say they have taken steps to protect their tenants and their shareholders' interests without relying on the state.

Banks such as Standard Bank and Nedbank are also guaranteeing their customers and staff that they will have access to banking facilities after Day Zero.

Amdec CEO James Wilson said its development and construction arms had both implemented measures and the company was confident it would be able to operate normally through the crisis.

"Our construction division is trying to preserve water by reducing its use. We are trying to get off the municipal supply as much as possible. We use boreholes, effluent water and nonwater-intensive building techniques," said Wilson.

Cement is predelivered and Amdec does not mix cement. Amdec is using steel frames and lightweight materials for interior

walls, instead of bricks, which require water to be set.

Werner van Antwerpen, head of sustainability at Growthpoint, said the company, which owns 37 industrial properties, 34 office buildings and nine retail centres in Cape Town, has two days worth of water stored for all its tenants.

"We began to look at the consumption efficiency of our buildings across SA about four years back and began to implement plans, including a crisis plan in the last half-year. Our Cape portfolio's water use was down 40% last year," he said. After the two days, Growthpoint would have to access an augmented water supply.

For a start, the company had an air-to-water plant in its Sandton office, which was one potential source of water for tenants in Cape Town.

"This technology is energy intensive to use but can be set up easily. There are various US suppliers that we can access," Van Antwerpen said.

Grant Elliott, GM coastal at Redefine Properties, said that together with the co-operation from communities, tenants and employees, the company's Western Cape arm was able to reduce water usage by more than 10% during the past 12 months. Hyprop Investments, which owns three malls in Cape Town - Canal Walk, Somerset Mall and Cape Gate - has reduced water consumption between 20% and 40% across the malls compared with 2017.

It has spent about R19m in capital to implement a grey water system as well as a backup potable water and backup grey water system. Meanwhile, the banking sector is also preparing for Day Zero. Standard Bank spokesman Ross Linstrom said that, where required, the bank would try to have atmospheric generators that would produce between 300 litres and 500 litres of water per day.

For larger sites, multiple generators may be used and employees would have access to bottled water or sachets of water to remain hydrated. Ablution facilities would be made available and waterless urinals and sanitisers would be used.

*Source: Business Day*

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