

Brand new Generator Will Help Greenville hospital Avoid Power Supply Disruptions

A 124-year-old hospital in Eastern Cape built by Roman settlers in the heart of rural outskirts has received a cutting-edge power generator after years of power cuts due to unreliable electricity supply.

Greenville Hospital in Bizana, one of the far-flung healthcare facilities of the Eastern Cape Department of Health was built in 1900 by the Roman Catholic Church which still stands next door.

Greenville is one of twenty-five hospitals that were earmarked for power generation upgrade. The facility has received a generator with a capacity of 400kVA. Initially, the hospital used a hired generator with 350kVA which would often breakdown and require maintenance, while the hospital staff and patients bore the brunt.

Health's infrastructure department confirmed that a sizeable investment of R16m had been set aside for the procurement of 25 generators and installations at most healthcare facilities had commenced.

St Barnabas, Tower Hospital, Dora Nginza, Stutterheim, All Saints, Victoria Hospital, Graaff-Reinet, Jose Person TB hospital, Martje Venter Hospital, Fort England to mention a few will receive their own generators worth over R500k.

Leasing a generator can easily cost the taxpayer R50k to R80k monthly as it is an essential need for operations to continue.

Lukhanyo Banca, director of engineering and technical services at Eastern Cape Health Department infrastructure said electricity reticulation in the former Transkei area was never intended to supply the number of villages that have sprung up over the past years.

As a result, Eskom and municipalities were buckling under the pressure of supplying energy to communities and government facilities. As a result, many government facilities suffered the consequences because of historical challenges.

Banca said the new generator which has a 4000 litre diesel tank automatically kicked in in less than 10 seconds, after a power cut and it also boasts a wireless communication system which is able to send messages to engineers through a sim card.

"It has got an information system that tells you everything, like how long the fuel will last, when is the service due, etc.

"You would find that even wind can disrupt the power supply across the former Transkei, hence we are running a campaign of installing our own generators that will supply the department's facilities.

"For instance, the sub station supplying power to Madwaleni Hospital is in Qunu. Meaning its too far from that hospital and as a result the [power] line going to the hospitals keeps on tapping – hence power supply issues arise.

"So, now we have increased the capacity of the generator just to be sure it can do the work. But we will also monitor the situations," Banca said.

He said the department had a plan to 'go green' at all facilities and utilise solar systems as a cost cutting measure.

"We are also piloting a renewable energy project of installing solar and battery systems at all clinics. For now, we are starting with Mount Coke clinic, St Methews Clinic, Bhisho Hospital."

Banca said they wanted to eradicate the need to hire generators over a long time period as the department was under austerity measures due to its shrinking fiscus and growing Medico-Legal claims which have now reached billions.

"We will now only hire generators for a period no longer than 30 working days because that would be an emergency. We are trying by all means to save money for the department."

Service provider and machanical engineer at Lukhozi Consortium, Bruce Maliti said the generator would be able to power the entire hospital without fail.

Electrical engineer at Lukhozi Consortium Litha Gatyeni said Eskom had its challenges such as ageing infrastructure which added to loadshedding, making the power supply unreliable.

"The last generator in the hospital usually experienced problems and with this new one, that will change drastically and there will be improved power supply.

"The 400kVA capacity will be enough to electrify the whole hospital as soon the power trips or loadshedded. It automatically kicks without anyone starting it up," said Gatyeni.

Greenville Hospital, middle manager administration, Vuyeka Joyce Kheswa, said power cuts crippled their daily operations in an "unimaginable way."

"We could not do anything. At theater, operations could not be done, so doctors would really struggle with that.



"Patients were also struggling because they had to wash with cold water. Some of them are sick so it would be a problem, and even their clothes - we would not be able to wash them because we use the laundry machine."

Kheswa said the issue was beginning to threaten their laboratory service, but that was all in the past.

Dr Simnikiwe Makhaya, acting clinical manager at Greenville Hospital said doctors faced many challenges due to power unreliable supply.

Makhaya said the lack of power had "compromised" the well-being of their patients.

"We had a problem with the generator, it broke many times and without it we experienced many challenges. Like we use generators to pump water, so if we don't have the generator that means the entire hospital will be without water.

"It compromises the services that we give to the patients. When there is no electricity for two hours there's a lot that go wrong," said Makhaya.

He said with the new generator, their working conditions would change for the better.

"Having a generator means we will be able to operate in theatre for hours [on end] because before it was a challenge. This also means a reliable source of water supply," he said.