

UIF scrutinising suspicious relief claims

Employment and Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi has assured Parliament that the department is conducting the requisite due diligence as it disburses Covid-19 TERS Benefits to avoid processing fraudulent claims.



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The Minister made the assurance during a virtual Employment and Labour Portfolio Committee meeting on Wednesday.

Suspicious claims, said the Minister, are being subjected to forensic audits where foul play is suspected.

“With these huge payments, inevitably you will attract criminals and companies colluding with employees to try and fleece the coffers. We will be engaging the services of the auditor-general and auditing firms to ensure that we comb through all the payments,” the Minister said.

By Wednesday, the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), an agency of the department, had paid over R14-billion to workers as a relief payment in the time of lockdown that has been necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the country and the world.



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UIF Commissioner Teboho Maruping, during the meeting, indicated there were employers who were suddenly claiming for more employees than those who are in the Fund's systems. Previously, the fund would pay but raise debt against the companies to be paid with interests and penalties.

Maruping indicated that where companies were still on lockdown, the process of payment would be fast tracked in May as the Fund already had the details.

"Moreover, we are paying workers directly and we have increased our capacity to process the claims. We will easily check on those who have not returned to work enabling that simplicity of payments. We will also advise the companies that there is no need to apply again and that we will automatically pay. The system will be open for applications this coming Friday, 22 May 2020," Maruping said.

With regard to the Compensation Fund (CF), Commissioner Vuyo Mafata said the CompEasy system was working smoothly and claims to the contrary were untrue. He was responding to a question from a Member of Parliament who had intimated that the system was in shambles.



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Mafata indicated that the CF has migrated more than 80% of all valid invoices into the new system and where this has not happened, this was because there were still issues that needed to be resolved with the claims submitted.

"Since April we have paid more than R400-million in claims and continue to do so. The system is working. However, over and above that, we continue to engage medical advisors and many other stakeholders. We have received favourable uptake of the system which also allows the claimants a degree of freedom to do their own claims," he said.

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