

Make sure you use an expert.

The Borehole Water Association of South Africa (BWA) warns that illegal water connections to municipal water supplies are placing increasing pressure on already strained systems, while many communities across the country struggle with water shortages and dry taps. The need for reliable water sources is also becoming increasingly urgent nationwide.

According to the BWA, lawful and compliance-focused borehole drilling is not only an emergency measure, but also a long-term solution to relieve the pressure on South Africa's aging and deteriorating water infrastructure.

"Illegal connections to municipal water supplies place additional strain on already stretched systems," says Derek Whitfield, president of the BWA.

Whitfield says the initiation of borehole projects in nine informal settlements in Gauteng is an important step toward providing water to growing communities—especially where traditional infrastructure development has not yet reached these areas or has been in disrepair for years.

According to the BWA, a permit or permission for small-scale borehole drilling on your own property is not required.

"You do not need to ask the Department of Water and Sanitation for permission to drill on a small scale on your property," explains Albertus Lombaard, CEO and special drilling advisor of the BWA.



He says that only certified contractors should be used: Boreholes are an expensive investment, and the drilling depth may vary depending on the underlying water source.

"The contractors have the necessary knowledge and experience to drill for water responsibly," he says.

The association encourages owners to use local geologists and professional, trained specialists to ensure that boreholes meet all safety and quality standards.

And almost no two boreholes are the same — with the underlying water source on a property playing a decisive role.

"That's why it's essential to involve experts who can assess the geological composition of the soil and accurately determine the most suitable drilling location and depth," says Lombaard.

More drilling contractors needed

He further warns that compliance-focused drilling is essential to protect natural water sources and prevent groundwater pollution.

"More than 80% of South Africa's towns depend on groundwater as their primary source of safe drinking water," he says.

"This situation highlights the need for more trained and certified drilling contractors in our country. Borehole drilling is a critical skill in the context of South Africa's water challenges and provides responsible access to our groundwater resources."

The BWA recently presented a series of training programmes, in collaboration with the Department of Water and Sanitation, as part of its commitment to professional and safe access to groundwater.

With the support of the Institute for Groundwater Studies, which developed specialized course material for drilling contractors, pump installers, and testing contractors, the BWA will henceforth offer the training and certify experts as official members of the association.

Where the association has so far mainly acted as a distributor of information, the BWA can now, through training and accreditation, offer greater value to its members," says Whitfield. "This can only enhance the professionalism of the sector."



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