



MEDIA STATEMENT

Eskom welcomes dismissal of Rural Maintenance case, but wishes to address misconceptions

FRIDAY, 21 APRIL 2023: It is unfortunate that Eskom and Rural Maintenance had to resolve the interpretation of requirements of municipalities that have embedded generation through a high court ruling. Such requirements are stipulated in NRS048-9, the NERSA approved National Code of Practice for Emergency Demand Reduction and System Restoration Practices. All NERSA licensees are required to implement this Code of Practice to ensure the fair implementation of loadshedding and to protect the integrity of the national electricity grid.

Eskom remains committed to implement all required measures to protect the national electricity grid. We are therefore relieved that the application brought against Eskom by Rural Maintenance, electricity distributor for Mafube Local Municipality in the Free State, its subsidiary (Rural Free State) and the Mafube Business Forum, has been dismissed with costs by the Johannesburg High Court on 20 April 2023. The case was heard on 05 April 2023.

Since the reason for the dismissal was the absence of a mandate from Mafube Local Municipality to institute legal proceedings and not the non-adherence of Rural Free State (RFS) to the Loadshedding Code of Practice (NRS048-09), Eskom wishes to address misconceptions created by the applicants.

Eskom approved RFS' application to implement self-loadshedding on 25 January 2023. Self-loadshedding allows a qualifying municipality to protect its critical loads such as sewerage systems and water pumps from interruptions. RFS started implementing self-loadshedding on 01 February 2023. Problems between the two parties emerged when RFS introduced "voiding", a term created by them to describe a situation where they do not implement loadshedding as per the approved schedules during daytime hours when their solar PV plant is in optimal operation. Eskom repeatedly rejected this proposal and attempted to help RFS understand why this is unacceptable and in violation of NRS048-09. It is at this stage that Rural Maintenance opted to institute legal processes against Eskom.

To illustrate Eskom's reason for objecting to the voiding practice, as implemented by RFS in Frankfort, the following scenario can be considered:

Let's say a household has a grid-tied rooftop solar installation. The rooftop solar installation does not have a battery storage system installed. Although the installation contributes to a reduction in the need for utility-supplied electricity to the household, its generation capacity is not sufficient to cover the total electricity demand of the household. When utility-supplied electricity is interrupted during daytime hours while the solar installation is in optimal operation, the solar system is still able to fulfil some of the household's energy needs. Although during loadshedding, the family can still switch on lights and some appliances, they will be limited by the supply from their solar system. If this household had battery storage for their solar system or if they had an additional power source that is sufficient for their demand, such as a generator

Issued by:

Eskom Industry Support and Stakeholder Management
CentralEast Cluster
Stefanie Jansen van Rensburg
jvrenssa@eskom.co.za

which they would only switch on during power outages, they would have been better equipped to continue with life as normal during a power interruption such as loadshedding.

In the case of Frankfort, the generation capacity of the solar plant is not sufficient to cover all the electricity needs of the town during loadshedding. Even during daytime hours when the plant is running at optimal operation, a portion of the town's electricity requirements are still supplied by Eskom. As in the rest of the country, the Eskom-supplied electricity to Frankfort is also subject to loadshedding. If RFS was able to substitute the Eskom-supplied portion through alternative electricity sources, such as electricity from battery storage or another generation facility that is only employed during a power outage, they would have been able to eliminate the need for loadshedding.

NRS048-9 clause 4.12.2.1 states: "Where a municipality or metropolitan municipality has embedded generation, and such generation is not already included in the normal load profile of the municipality, such generation may be used to reduce the load reduction required under emergencies". In the case of Frankfort, the generation is already included as part of the normal load profile and as such the generation cannot be offset against loadshedding; therefore, RFS is non-compliant to clause 4.12.2.1. The PV plant in Frankfort has no standby capability to offset the total demand; thus, the plant's output forms part of the system base load and Frankfort remains subjected to loadshedding.

In a press release issued by Rural Free State on 20 April 2023, it indicated that it now "has no alternative but to switch off portions of the sun farm during the day as from Friday, 21 April 2023" and that it will "continue to apply power cuts to the community members who could otherwise have made use of the sun electricity produced by the solar farm." In addition, they indicated that they "will have to dump unused solar energy whilst parts of Frankfort experience loadshedding".

These statements by RFS are misleading as Eskom does not place any restrictions on their use of self-generated electricity. Eskom welcomes the use of electricity from independent power producers that can assist in alleviating loadshedding. What Eskom requires from RFS as a responsible participant in the national grid is to comply with the requirements of the Code of Practise in order to protect the national electricity network in the interest of the country as a whole.

ENDS