

Media Releases 2009

SARS reporting on the Impact of Industrial Action

Pretoria, 07 September 2009 – The South African Revenue Service (SARS) can confirm that despite today's industrial action, all offices across the country remained operational and open for business.

Operations did continue at a reduced level with the biggest impact experienced between 10am and 12pm.

Branch offices in the Western Cape – Bellville and Cape Town – were the most affected in the morning by an attendance rate of about 20%. After protesting workers issued SARS management with memorandums, many staff members returned to their offices.

Branch offices in Durban and Cape Town were closed temporarily for a short period during protest actions but later resumed operations.

While offices operated within the contingency plans, the reduced numbers of staff did result in longer queues. For those taxpayers who were not able to remain in queues for prolonged periods a ticketing system was introduced.

The strike's impact on Customs services was minimal, with the exception of Durban harbour and the Lebombo border post. At OR Tambo International Airport 95% of staff reported for duty in the morning; however 50% left at about 10.00 am. Skeleton staff was deployed to manage critical functions. The transfer to the 2pm shift occurred without incident.

Attempts to disrupt operations at the Lebombo and Durban ports of entry resulted in the South African Police Service intervening to ensure that no incidents of intimidation, obstruction of trade, violence or the destruction to property occurred.

SARS will continue to negotiate with organised labour to reach a mutually acceptable wage agreement.

With respect to the court application which SARS brought on Friday, seeking an urgent interdict to prevent the strike action, the court this morning dismissed the SARS application. The basis for the dismissal is that the application lacked urgency.

The court held that SARS should apply to the CCMA on the issue of whether SARS operations can be regarded as an essential service that can be exempt from industrial action in future. SARS will approach the CCMA with a formal application soon.