

## ESKOM Refuses to Repair Transformers In Orange Farm Due To Non-Payments

A group of Orange Farm residents recently convened a meeting, despite the restrictions of level 4 of lockdown. The meeting took place on Sunday, 17 May 2020. The community say they decided to meet because no one is listening to them. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a solution to engage ESKOM to restore electricity to the neighbourhood.

A year has now passed since this community has been living in darkness. The electricity transformers in the area have been damaged and dysfunctional for some time now and ESKOM has still not bothered to fix them.

The community says the situation is worse now since there is lockdown following the coronavirus outbreak. Part of the reason people say it is worse is because everyone is expected to stay at home regardless of whether they have power or not. People have not been able to go to other areas to get their phones charged as they usually do.

The small businesses in the area are affected since they can not operate fully or normally. The tavern owners say they do not know how they are going to pay the fine that is required by ESKOM to fix the problem because they make no income. They have tried to involve the ward councillor to resolve the matter but the councillor says there is no way forward. Residents feel the councillor is also failing them.

The power utility said the township's electricity supply collapsed after a transformer was overloaded by residents who illegally connected themselves to the network and vandalised infrastructure. According to ESKOM, the electricity service is often disrupted and undermined by individuals who do not pay for the services.

After ESKOM held meetings engaging with community representatives in the affected areas, it was agreed that operations will resume after a repair and replacement of vandalised infrastructure. But Orange Farm residents in the affected area are expected to pay a fine of R6000 per household. Many say this amount is difficult for them to raise as many people are not working, and others survive on social grants.

The residents are asking for support from communities which are not directly affected, to join them when they go back to ESKOM to demand the restoring of transformers.

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