

Nelson Mandela University and Rescue South Africa Partnership

Specialised rescue missions in the generally under resourced Eastern Cape have been given a lifeline, with Nelson Mandela University becoming the dispatch hub of Rescue South Africa activities and equipment as part of a ground-breaking partnership launched on Wednesday (17 November 2021).

The partnership sees much-needed equipment and capacity building efforts being the major spin-off, to the benefit of the broader Eastern Cape community and the University's students, particularly those in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Through this collaboration and signed memorandum of agreement, about 60 tons of Rescue SA equipment – to the tune of R30-million – was moved from Gauteng province to the University, where it will serve the greater Eastern Cape communities in emergency and rescue activities.

Speaking at the virtual launch, the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Zukiswa Zingela, said the partnership bode well with the institution and faculty's core principles of strengthening public facilities and health services through collaborations across faculties and with various external stakeholders for the benefit of our communities.

"This is where our partnership with Rescue SA perfectly fits into our long-term vision. Our Emergency Medical Care (EMC) team is primarily situated on the Missionvale Campus and this is where we plan to further expand the facilities that they require for training, especially in rescue skills, which is a specialised skill in the profession," said Prof Zingela.

"We are proud to be announcing this partnership today. Our campus will be the home or hub of not only enhanced training opportunities in rescue, but also the disaster response activities of Rescue SA, which will be mobilised from our Ocean Sciences Campus.

"We have made a commitment to the CEO of Rescue SA, Mr Ian Scher, that the University, and particularly the Faculty of Health Sciences, will strive to ensure that Rescue SA will continue to be operational and provide the necessary support at ground level, when needed. And that we will also build capacity in rescue activities in South Africa by providing support towards the maintenance and control of the elaborate cache of rescue equipment that is part of this collaboration.

"So, if you can picture students abseiling from buildings, bridges or crawling through trenches, you can form an idea of just how hard and intricate their training is. Added to this is the work integrated learning (WIL) hours in intensive care units (ICUs) and on ambulances over weekend, where students spend their time training."



The cache of equipment includes rescue vehicles, boats and other instruments of aid, that are critical to the various rescue missions, such as motor vehicle accidents, fires, floods and other humanitarian aid requirements and relief efforts.

At the University, the equipment is specifically housed within the Faculty of Health Sciences, where students in the various health disciplines will benefit from the real-life, practical experience of life-saving efforts that are central to their chosen field.

Rescue SA chief executive officer, Ian Scher, said the work of the University in health and emergency care resonated with that of the organisation as both sought to serve communities as best as possible.

He added that the decision to move the equipment was in a concerted bid to augment the scarce rescue resources in the Eastern Cape.

“With motivation and much enthusiasm from Mandela University lecturer, Travis Trower, who is also a board member and previous principal at Rescue SA, we decided that the cache of equipment would be better utilised moved from the well-resourced Gauteng to the Eastern Cape,” said Scher.

“Travis made us aware of the shortage of and dire need for rescue equipment in the province. So, the equipment was moved from the University of Johannesburg to Mandela University, where it is already being used to train students, not only in the classrooms but on the road, where valuable experience is gained.”

Mandela University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching, Professor Cheryl Foxcroft, said as part of the institution's learning and teaching, research and engagement missions of the university, one of the University's main objectives is to foster graduates who are socially conscience, responsible global citizens who serve the public good.

"We are looking forward to seeing how the natural synergies between our two organisations will grow from strength to strength. If one considers the visions and mission of both our organisations, we share much in common. Particularly, we strive to put people first, especially when they're at their most vulnerable," says Prof Foxcroft.

The institution's Emergency Medical Care programme, in particular, benefits from this agreement in that the programme's 110 students will gain the level of practical experience that best equips them for real-life emergencies, using state of the art equipment.

[Rescue SA Collaboration Launch](#)

<https://www.rescue-sa.co.za/>