

Crossroads duped by alleged fraudsters in Western Cape water scam

Crossroads has been the unwitting victim of an alleged scam as it sought to be a good Samaritan in the Western Cape water crisis and warns others against similar scams during this difficult period for millions of people.

Crossroads is a logistics services organisation that operates a large fleet of vehicles in several sub-Saharan Africa countries with depots in many locations, including Cape Town.

“As a commercial business using water in Cape Town we felt we needed to do something positive toward helping in this time of crisis,” says Hennie van Wyk, COO of Crossroads. “We decided to have our commercial cleaning supplier commercially sterilise one of our tankers, fill it with water in Gauteng, and transport it to our facility in Cape Town where we have already initiated other water conserving activities.”

However, Crossroads personnel were duped by a fraudulent supplier for the water. Crossroads initially contacted employees of the local fire department who advised them to source water via the Internet, which the company did. Crossroads employees contacted a bulk water supplier that quoted for the volume the company sought and issued an invoice, which was duly paid by Crossroads.

Upon arrival at the agreed pickup point for the water the Crossroads vehicle was re-routed by the bulk water supplier personnel to a different location in Muldersdrift. But as soon as the tanker was filled at the second location a Mogale City councillor, who had allegedly waited nearby during the entire filling operation, attempted to apprehend all people on site.

“Our driver and assistant naturally remained where they were but the bulk water supplier employees immediately fled the scene. Our people were detained but, upon us producing the legitimate receipt for what we thought was a perfectly legal transaction, authorities were understanding of their roles and nobody has been arrested,” says van Wyk. “It’s devastating that criminals will take advantage of us when we are trying to do the right thing.”

Crossroads personnel have since been in contact with a Department of Water Affairs spokesperson who advised that water suppliers must produce a valid licence issued by the Department of Water Affairs or, if the supplier is a local municipality, that proof of authorisation from the same local municipality must be provided.

“We have agreed through our attorney to be a state witness to help the state prosecute these alleged criminals,” says van Wyk. “It is unfortunate that we have had our fingers burned in this way but we will endeavour to ease the burden on the people of Cape Town.”