

# New rules sought to combat acid mine drainage

By [Khulekani Magubane](#)

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The government is looking for new ways to regulate the effects of mining activity on SA's scarce water resources, according to a policy position articulated by Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane.



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The policy position paper was published in the Government Gazette.

In it, Mokonyane said "emergency interventions" were under way to deal with acid mine drainage in the Witwatersrand gold fields, where new technologies for testing mine water were being tried out.

This comes as a team including University of Cape Town students has come up with a salt-based method for mine wastewater treatment, which will be rolled out at the Tweefontein colliery in Mpumalanga.

Mokonyane said companies should consider acid mine drainage and other water pollutants not only as a threat, but also as an opportunity for private-public partnerships.

"It is possible to use treated mine water to help alleviate the water shortage in the country. A few flagship projects are in operation that produce quality drinking water from active coal mines through desalination systems, and this water is then fed into municipal networks," the minister said.

The policy document said mining companies should, "in the interest of optimum water resource protection", provide infrastructure and planning for the life cycle of their sites and after mine closures.

The policy paper says poor and vulnerable mining communities must be part of decision-making processes in the mining value chain, particularly in water management.

The Chamber of Mines was studying the paper and Stephinah Mudau, its environmental department head, said the chamber welcomed the policy aimed at tackling challenges related to acid mine drainage.

*Source: Business Day*

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