

LABOUR-ESKOM By Phumza Sokana
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NUM GIVES ESKOM STRIKE NOTICE

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) on Wednesday formally notified Eskom of its intention to go on strike next week over wages, a union spokesman said.

"Today [Wednesday] we started mobilising our members for the strike," said NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka.

The possibility of the industrial action being illegal because

Eskom was an essential service "doesn't matter".

"We will cross that bridge when we get to it. We have already notified them of our intention to go on strike," said Seshoka.

"They cannot tie us to a tree and then tell us we can't do anything when abused because we cannot untie ourselves.

"We are going on strike and they cannot do anything about that."

Seshoka said Eskom's most recent offer was for an 8.5 percent wage increase and a R1000 housing allowance.

Unions have demanded a nine percent increase and a R2500 housing allowance.

Seshoka said the NUM would have been willing to compromise on the wage increase only if management had acceded to its housing allowance demand.

He said union leaders were busy with logistics on Wednesday to ready themselves for the strike.

Of the meeting Eskom said it was organising for Wednesday, Seshoka said: "We never planned to meet with them. Why would they

organise meetings when we have rejected their offer and they have nothing new on the table?"

Eskom human resources director Bhabhalazi Bulunga said the parastatal had not received the strike notice by 2pm.

"Even if they notify us of the strike, it remains illegal. It's

like telling someone you are going to murder them, that doesn't make the act legal."

He said NUM was risking committing itself to illegal action and getting its members arrested.

"We are an essential service, and therefore the security agencies will take over and arrest anyone engaging in illegal

activities," said Bulunga.

He said Eskom was unable to meet with Solidarity and the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa), its other unions on Wednesday.

"We were busy with internal meetings, trying to put contingency plans in place in light of the rumours of the strike.

"Besides, they are also still consulting their members, we did not want to push them," he said.

Solidarity said it would make an announcement at 2.30pm about the wage negotiations following its meetings in the morning.

Numsa spokesman Alex Mashilo said the union was still consulting its members on what action to take on Wednesday.