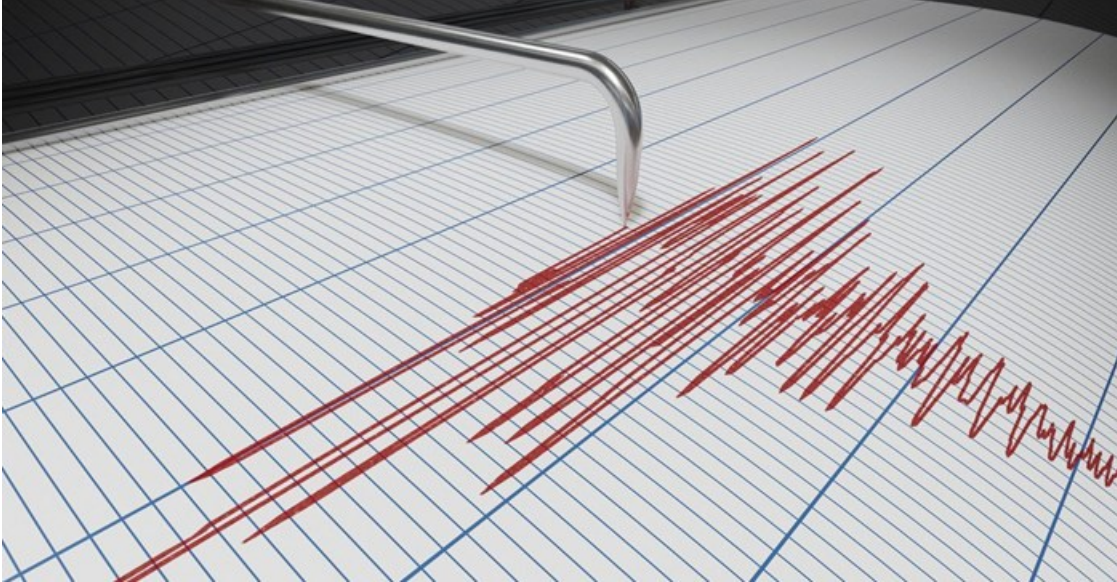


# SANParks approves polygraph testing

South African National Parks (SANParks) is developing a standard operating procedure for its recently approved polygraph testing policy.



Source: iStock.

This is according to SANParks general manager: media and stakeholder relations, Rey Thakhuli who said the SANParks polygraph testing policy was approved by the SANParks Board during November 2022 and has subsequently been signed into effect by the acting chief executive officer.

He said the policy was developed after extensive consultation with relevant experts, including experts on labour law and consultation with organised labour.

According to Thakhuli, the intention is ultimately to make polygraph testing compulsory to certain job categories as determined by a risk assessment of function and job content, however, the current labour-law environment and SANParks conditions of service disallow compulsory application of polygraph testing.

The policy, however, paves the way for negotiating a collective agreement in the near future that will result in the amendment of the conditions of service as well the inclusion of compulsory polygraph testing as part of new employment contracts.

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He said for existing employees, amendment of employment contracts in line with the policy can only be undertaken following negotiation and conclusion of a collective agreement with organised labour. He emphasised that there is also an option for individual employees to voluntarily agree to have their employment contract amended.

“This will be done to manage risks without compromising employees’ rights resulting in victimisation.”

The value of the policy and the, still to be developed standard operating procedure, is that it allows for the application of testing on a voluntary basis and a manner that enables risk mitigation to manage risks without compromising employees’ rights or creating an environment of victimisation.

“It is accordingly important to appreciate that polygraph testing is not the answer to prevent or manage staff involvement in criminality but it is a tool that needs to be used as part of the toolkit with a full understanding of its benefits, but also its limitations,” Thakhuli elaborates.

He pointed out that even in the voluntary form, polygraph testing does play an important role in preventing staff involvement in criminality, such as rhino poaching.

He explained that these conclusions were drawn following a pilot conducted in the Kruger National Park among the ranger service a couple of years ago.

This pilot study served to inform the current policy and has the following benefits:

- For most of our rangers that are honest and committed to the protection of rhino, it provides an opportunity to demonstrate that they are trustworthy – this is an important imperative for team cohesion and constitutes positive pressure to all the cores.
- The instrument is also one of the many initiatives that SANParks uses to deter employees from participating in criminal activity.
- An indication of potential deception in a result, while it cannot be utilised to initiate disciplinary action, utilised with other tools, such as investigations, inform criminal and disciplinary procedures.

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