

HOW TSEBO ACHIEVED CATERING CONTINUITY FOR 11 MAJOR KZN HOSPITALS OVER A PERIOD OF UNREST

When a 10-day unrest broke out in South Africa in July 2021, parts of KwaZulu-Natal became isolated due to road closures and traffic blockades.

This negatively impacted regular supply chain activity into and out of the province. For Tsebo Catering Solutions, who provides catering for nine large private and four major public hospitals in some of the worst affected areas in KZN, the situation necessitated quick thinking and teamwork to ensure all patients and employees remained safe and fed over the period.

THE CHALLENGE

As a result of the unrest, patient numbers increased. At the same time, public transport came to a halt and petrol shortages and safety concerns limited the movement of private vehicles. This resulted in many employees who were unable to get to work. Large food distributors and suppliers could not travel freely and could not access hospitals, and many staff (from medical to catering, cleaning and security) could not return home safely and was forced to remain on site. Operating with only skeleton staff, at a time when the third wave of COVID-19 was at its peak, presented a lot of challenges for Tsebo, including:

- guaranteeing service continuity
- assuring stock availability and consistent supply
- pledging staff safety, transport, and accommodation
- maintaining COVID-19 protocols
- assisting stranded employees who wanted to come to work
- enduring a crippled supply-chain and halted transport system

OUR SOLUTION

With a strong background in risk mitigation, Tsebo began mobilising its support structures and extensive supply chain network as soon as it became apparent that unrest was brewing.

Staffing

Where possible, reservations were made for catering staff to have accommodation close to the hospitals, others were accommodated on site, or colleagues privately transported their co-workers. Tsebo made use of WhatsApp groups to communicate with employees and worked out strategic plans to get staff to work where it was safe to do so.

Despite these efforts, the Catering division still operated on skeleton staff. Whereas about 320 catering employees usually operate across the 11 hospitals, the number of employees was reduced to 100. Tsebo employees rallied together, working long hours and, thanks to their extensive training and adaptable attitudes, were able to reliably multi-task and take on roles outside of their normal scope of work.

Supply chain management

Tsebo prides itself on its partnerships with small to medium-sized suppliers in the communities it operates in, and these relationships came into significant effect over the unrest. Six local produce and dry goods suppliers went out of their way to ensure that the hospitals receive food. Temporary distribution centres were set up at healthcare facilities in Durban and Ballito to receive goods, and Tsebo management and senior staff used their personal vehicles to deliver food to the hospitals in outlying areas.



Menu planning

While it was still essential to provide special diet meals to patients with specific requirements, the overall menu plan was streamlined to make fewer offerings available. This allowed Tsebo to function with minimal staff and to stretch the available food stocks, while still providing patients with three meals and two snacks a day. Because staff could not leave the premises, Tsebo provided additional meals to frontline workers.

TEDICS



Despite operating at third of staff capacity, Tsebo was able to serve **7 211** meals over the unrest period. This equates to more than **1 000** additional meals, because of increased patient load and the need to provide staff meals.

