

# HOW PIKITUP PICKS IT UP



A familiar sight in Joburg, these Pikitup trucks are core to providing essential waste removal services, the best way to prevent illegal dumping

Managing waste is the cornerstone of any functioning city. For Johannesburg, South Africa's most populous city with 4 million residents, this task is done by Pikitup.

**E**stablished in 2001, Pikitup and the City of Johannesburg entered into a Service Delivery Agreement that mandates Pikitup to provide waste management and refuse removal services to the residents of Johannesburg. The entity is also responsible for resource security, environmental sustainability, and good governance in the CoJ. The resources of the company are directed towards the key strategies and priorities envisaged by the National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste streams.

Municipal waste management involves not just the act of collection, but actively fighting against illegal dumping, something that is a challenge in the city of Johannesburg. This, along with

changing the environmental landscape, requires more sustainable practices alongside day-to-day operations.

## Combating illegal dumping

Muzi Mkhwanazi, communications manager for Pikitup says, "The fight against illegal dumping is high on our priority list and requires a multi-pronged approach." They have highlighted five keyways to manage illegal dumping in the city:

### 1 Collection

The entity reports that the number one way to prevent illegal dumping is to actively provide refuse removal. "It is key that we provide waste collection services to our residents once a week, both in informal and formal areas. Informal areas are important as they often lack the infrastructure for waste management, and informal settlements represent the chance to really see the benefits of this service." This service is well planned, and backlogs threaten the entire system, Mkhwanazi says, "We have robust backlog systems in place that prevent and solve them if they do arise." Part of the collection is communication, and Pikitup states that they send communication out in the event of service interruptions or delays to inform the community of plans to service affected areas. Outside of their mandated collection service, they

have implemented dumping clearance where they actively clean up illegal dumping sites and then provide people within the area with refuse bags, as well as ensure the area remains waste free for up to 7 days. "Prevention is always better than cure, and we have 40 garden sites where community members drop waste. We also offer clean building rubble disposal for free at all Pikitup landfill sites."

### 2 Education and awareness

Human behavior dictates the effectiveness of every public project, and actively shaping human behavior is pivotal to the success of Pikitup's efforts in fighting illegal dumping.

"Our education and awareness strategy takes on a two-pronged approach which is to:

- Create awareness through education.
- Mobilise the community by building an understanding of good waste management practices which includes the reduction of littering and illegal dumping.

Pikitup's education campaigns are targeted towards areas where illegal dumping is a problem. They identify the area, engage in dump clear outs, and then actively campaign in the community to change the behavior. "Our campaigns speak to environmental concerns and community health, as well as the legality." Getting the community to recognise the problem, report the problem, and self-enforce is key to preventing illegal dumping." Their campaigns cover the prevention of illegal dumping, dos and



Muzi Mkhwanazi, communications manager for Pikitup





Involving law enforcement is crucial to combating illegal dumping

don'ts relating to illegal dumping in public spaces, pavements, and curb sides. Alongside these targeted campaigns they also engage in 'blitz campaigns' at schools, churches, organised cleanups, and door-to-door. These focus on promoting and educating on waste by-laws, and Mkhwanazi says, "Engaging with the community, especially school children, is the best way to see action and change human behaviour patterns."

### 3 Law enforcement

Changing human behavior and other long-term approaches are vital, but the reality is that arresting and charging people is just as

important in the short term. Pikitup is piloting a 60-person Illegal Dumping Officer squad that works with the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) to prevent dumping and enforce the law. Mkhwanazi states,

"These officers are permanently deployed in strategic regions. Illegal Dumping Officers work as a conduit between Pikitup and JMPD and act as ambassadors for environmental contraventions. The role of Illegal Dumping



Illegal dumping is more than an eyesore; it is a health and safety concern

**KleenaJoburg100 aims to keep Johannesburg's city-centre clean and waste free**





Officers is to carry out regular daily patrols and monitor illegal dumping spots, especially by driving and walking around the spots at regular intervals as stipulated in the targeted service areas."

#### 4 Partnerships

Mkhwanazi says, "Illegal dumping is not a one-person issue, nor is it a one organisation issue. We do our best to engage with communities, and we also do our best to engage with other entities, the more people helping, the more successful our efforts will be." Partnerships are essential for Pikitup's efforts, and outside of their partnering with JMPD they also partner with community policing forums, residents' associations, neighbourhood watchers, private security companies and other spheres of

government. Partnerships enable the educational campaigns that Pikitup embarks on, as well as create a united front against illegal dumping.

#### 5 Rehabilitation

Illegal dumping is not just about the eyesore, there are serious health and concerns involved and to this Mkhwanazi says, "It would be great if there was no illegal dumping, but there is. Much of our efforts post-prevention are focused on site rehabilitation." The culmination of their educational and community-based outreach, site rehabilitation identifies areas where illegal dumping is rampant and then implements a community lead initiative where they aim to "create stewardship in the general population." The CoJ have made the fight against illegal dumping a top priority, saying"

**Community vegetable gardens are an effective way to use spaces that were once dumping grounds**



**Illegal dumping is more than an aesthetic eyesore, it is a threat to community health and a crime**



the health, safety and dignity of communities are threatened by illegal dumping," and by placing the power in the hands of the affected communities allowing them to become stewards of their environment, the fight against illegal dumping becomes easier. Mkhwanazi add that "When service delivery works, and when site rehabilitation is successful communities see the benefit of a clean environment, and in turn they become the biggest actors in the fight against illegal dumping." Part of the rehabilitation process involves finding a different use for the site. So far, 40 former garden sites have been converted into integrated waste management facilities where recycling is taking place, and the disposal of waste is not limited to garden waste but to other forms of waste streams. The acceptance of other streams of waste in such sites contributed to curbing illegal dumping. In relation to rehabilitated illegal dumping spots, some have been converted into car washes, vegetable gardens, and community parks.

#### KleenaJoburg100 spots campaign

A new addition to Pikitup's campaigns, the KleenaJoburg100 Spots Campaign launched in June 2025, where the entity aims to integrate its tactics into one cohesive strategy by focusing on:

- **Rehabilitation of Illegal Dumping Sites:** The campaign will focus on identifying, cleaning, and rehabilitating 100 illegal dumping sites across the municipality, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of public spaces, and reducing environmental hazards.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Waste Management:** Through education and awareness programs, the campaign will encourage residents and businesses to adopt responsible waste disposal practices, emphasising the importance of proper waste management in maintaining a healthy environment.
- **Community Engagement and Participation:** The campaign seeks to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, encouraging them to participate actively in the identification and cleaning of illegal dumping sites.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** By uniting various stakeholders, the campaign aims to leverage resources, expertise, and knowledge to achieve its objectives, demonstrating the power of collaboration in addressing complex urban challenges

This campaign, spearheaded by the Johannesburg mayoral rehabilitation strategy team, is set to boost Pikitup's efforts and clean up the city of Johannesburg.

Mkhwanazi expands by saying, "While it is our job to implement action plans, we rely heavily on others; waste management works best when many people are involved and understand the goals." ■